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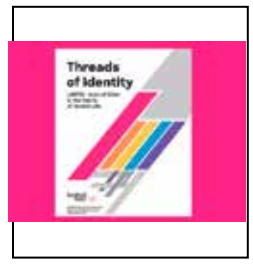

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JEWISH NEWS

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Weaving sacred sound into Jewish worship

By Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador

I first fell in love with the harp as a child when I was a camper at Interlochen. My piano instructor's room was adjacent to a harp studio, and though I never dared to touch the instrument, its physical beauty and

ethereal sound captivated me. The dream of playing the harp stayed with me for decades, but it wasn't until I began rabbinic school that I finally decided to take lessons and learn how to play the instrument.

From the very start, my harp teacher and friend, Carol Kappus, encouraged me not just to play for myself but to share my music with others. I took that to heart and when the pandemic shifted services online, I found myself leading prayer from my living room — where my harp stood within reach. As I had no sheet music on hand, I arranged a few simple liturgical melodies and played them during services, and to my surprise, the response was overwhelmingly positive. Encouraged by such warm and encouraging reactions, I began arranging more liturgical music for the harp.

Although I derive much pleasure from arranging music, it can be a labor intensive and time-consuming enterprise. One of the challenges I have encountered is the scarcity of harp settings for Jewish worship. It is easier to find Jewish harp music suited for weddings or instrumental concert ensembles than for communal prayerful singing. Unlike the piano or guitar, which have a wealth of arrangements available, the harp remains a relatively untapped instrument within the synagogue soundscape. Yet, its biblical resonance makes it a natural fit for prayer.

In addition to creating musical settings in the traditional synagogue modes and popular liturgical tunes, I have found deep joy in setting Jewish texts to folk melodies, particularly the lullaby genre. There is an innate intimacy and tenderness in lullabies that lends itself beautifully to prayer. When Russia invaded Ukraine, for example, I was moved to set the healing prayer from Numbers 12:13 — El na, refa na lah — to the melody of "The Dream Passes by the Window," a beloved Ukrainian lullaby. I have also set Ahavat Olam to two different folk melodies: the Welsh tune "Sleep My Pretty Child" and "Ero Oscuro," a hauntingly beautiful Sephardic melody. These pairings not only enrich the emotional depth of the prayers but also weave Jewish tradition into a broader musical tapestry of comfort and connection.

Beyond these adaptations, I have composed original settings for Mah Tovu, Yotzer Or, Mi Chamocha, and other liturgical texts, exploring the harp's ability to invite inner reflection, reverence, and healing. But what I have noticed most is that simply the presence of the harp brings joy to people, just as it did for me when I was a camper at Interlochen. The instrument creates a soothing pulse that stirs the hearts of congregants to sing and sink deeply into prayer.

I have also had the pleasure of playing the harp with another musician in my congregation, Debbie Gombert. With harp and flute, we led Achat Sha'alti and V'ahavta L'rei'echa Kamocha during the High Holy Days, joined by the ethereal voices of our Davening Team. I look forward to more opportunities to weave the harp into our communal worship. I feel blessed to be the rabbi of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) and to pray with such a musical and music-loving community, where the beauty of sacred sound is cherished and nurtured.

For more information about services or events or to receive Zoom links, please email: emily@aarecon.org. Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation website: aarecon.org

AARC Events for May

May 9–11
Community Retreat
May 23
Fourth Friday Kabbalat Shabbat. This is a hybrid service led by Rabbi Gabrielle Pescador in person at the JCC and on Zoom. Everyone is welcome! Followed by a nut-free potluck Oneg. 6:30 p.m.
May 28
Rosh Chodesh Sivan Minyan on Zoom. 9 a.m. ■

May is Jewish American Heritage Month

By Esther Terry

In April 2006, President George W. Bush proclaimed May as Jewish American Heritage Month (JAHM) and subsequent presidents have reaffirmed this month with their own proclamations. JAHM is an opportunity to remember and celebrate the diversity of Jewish Americans and their contributions to the United States.

A dedicated group of parent volunteers has been working to bring JAHM information and events to the Ann Arbor community this year. Esther Terry, Jennifer King, and Laura Pasek are part of the Jewish Education parent group. The Jewish Community Relations Committee's Rabbi Asher Lopatin advises the group and facilitates communication with other community leaders.

Terry, King, and Pasek developed an educational slide deck about contemporary and historical Jews of Ann Arbor and Michigan which they presented to the Ann Arbor Public Schools Board of Education in April. The slide deck will be distributed to the district along with information for teachers or families to contact featured individuals for virtual talks or classroom visits. Featured Ann Arborites include:

- Ruth Behar, University of Michigan professor, author, ethnographer, and MacArthur Fellow
- Barbara Levin Bergman (z"l), community leader and City and County office holder
- Aaron Dworkin, social entrepreneur, author, poet-journalist, filmmaker, educator, multimedia artist, and MacArthur Fellow
- Zilka Joseph, poet, scholar, educator, and editor influenced by Indian and Western cultures and by her Bene Israel roots in India
- SooJi Min-Maranda, executive director of ALEPH and career nonprofit executive, emphasizes personal narratives and raises the voices of the underserved and underrepresented
- Isaac Pickell, poet, editor, educator, PhD Candidate, and Cave Canem Fellow

The Ann Arbor District Library also is partnering with the JCRC and the parent volunteer group on a series of events celebrating Jewish American cultural heritage. All events will be held at the Downtown Library.

- May 7: Zilka Joseph and Isaac Pickell will present their poetry as Jewish Poets of Color.
- May 27: David Rodgers will host a piano concert and talk featuring stories, trivia, and historical background alongside performances of popular and Broadway music by Jewish composers.
- May 28: Mikhl Yashinsky will perform obscure Yiddish folk songs he learned as an apprentice to the veteran folk singer Ethel Raim. English translations will be projected and context on the songs' meanings and origins will also be shared.

The group also is recruiting volunteer parents, grandparents, and/or adult caregivers who want to read a story in their child's elementary classroom. School librarians will help the volunteer select a relevant story that fits the district's curricular standards.

For more information about the slide deck, the community events, or to volunteer as an in-school story reader, contact Esther Terry at ebjacinto@gmail.com ■

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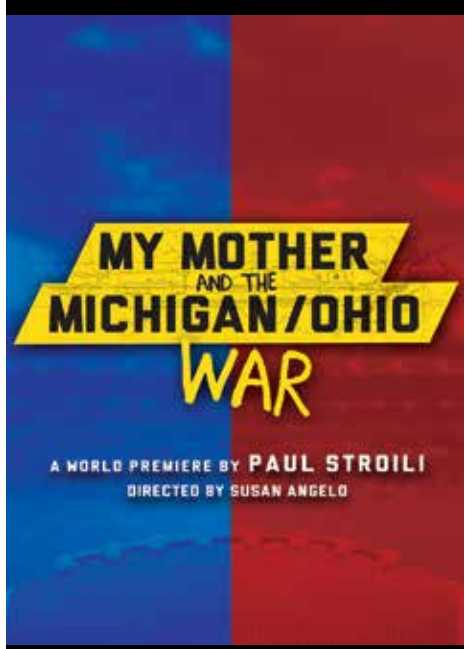

Izzy's history buff husband Freddy had a dream: a full-scale reenactment of The Michigan-Ohio War. But when a bizarre papier-mâché accident leaves Izzy a widow, she calls on her Wolverine daughter and Buckeye son to see Freddy's vision realized. Historical becomes hysterical in this comedy about family, football and the fight for the Toledo strip.

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From the editor

Cycles within cycles

It's Spring, and Jewish culture is blooming. If you are attuned to Jewish time, May this year is a full month of Counting the Omer. We count 49 days from the second day of Passover, each day an opportunity to meditate on a different combination of seven spiritual attributes. This issue of the *Washtenaw Jewish News* includes three poems in preparation for Shavuot (June 2), the end of counting and the real beginning of summer.

As I write this today it is Yom HaShoah, Holocaust Remembrance Day. By the time you receive and read this newspaper we will have celebrated Israel Independence Day, Yom Ha'atzmaut. A cycle within a deeper cycle, energized by each attribute creating its opposite.

Tomorrow I will receive a copy-edited manuscript of my forthcoming book, *By the Waters of Paradise* (publication date October 2025, Wayne State University Press). You readers of WJN have seen the early drafts, titled then "Looking for Rose," as I serialized 26 installments in the newspaper between 2019 and 2021. During Passover this year, I found myself asking the same questions, once again, that I've pondered for so many years. Here's a little excerpt from early in the book:

I've known Jews who read the Exodus story as our people's own history. For others, the story is a metaphor for God's relationship to humans, or for the way God interacts with history. The stories are about home, exile, sovereignty, responsibility, eternity.

The Exodus story could be rooted in historical facts, or it could be a fable, an allegory, a spiritual journey written with moral, or political, purpose. It can be read as a story that happened thousands of years ago, or that happened 150 years ago, is happening now, or hasn't happened yet. It could be a constitution for a patriarchy, as the Israeli feminist Esther Fuchs writes in Sexual Politics in the Biblical Narrative. *Or it could be a blueprint for liberation.*

I wonder, whose story is it that is told in the Torah? Is the cycle of slavery and liberation unending? Do we recreate the cycle by re-telling it every year? Is the cycle a spiral moving towards something better? For many years, because it was a hindrance to imagining and creating a new, non-hierarchical paradigm, I tried to leave the whole story behind, but I couldn't do it.

Next month, you'll be able to pre-order the book at a discounted rate. I hope you will and will help me think about these plaguing questions.

I want to send a special shout out to people who stepped up to write features for this May edition: Deborah Meyers Greene interviewed local LGBTQA+ Jews of Color; Benji Ben Baruch went into his archives to recount some history of local Jewish community fundraising; Idelle Hammond-Sass gives us some perspective on our local Ukrainian community; and Michael S. Simon sent a transcript of his address on the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Geislingen.

Remember to send me change of address if you move (the post office does not forward WJN). Check out the online calendar at washtenawjewishnews.org/calendar/ and also send me ideas for articles you'd like to read or write. Let's stay in touch. ■

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A 50th year to remember at Hebrew Day School

By Dr. Monica Woll Rosen, President, HDS Board of Trustees

This year has been one of profound renewal for the Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor.

Our community came together with open hearts and generosity to celebrate a transformative school renovation that resulted in a beautiful library and prayer space dedicated in memory of Anna Schwalb (z"l) and an aron kodesh (Torah ark) dedicated in memory of my sister, Samantha Woll (z"l). Not only has this new space been a welcomed addition by our students, but it has become a vibrant hub of community activity. We have been fortunate to host the JCC Early Childhood Center Shabbat Sing program, in addition to several other programs, enabling our Jewish community to partner and thrive together.

All year we have been thinking and reciting the shehechiyanu prayer — we are deeply grateful for reaching this 50th anniversary year. We have also been intentionally strategizing to ensure that we remain a sustainable institution that continues to bring Ann Arbor joy, community, and academic excellence for decades to come. Today, we are proud to be growing, and to be offering Ann Arbor families the opportunity to send their children to a Jewish day school. We stand poised to continue to grow and exceed the expectations of our students and their families.

We are planning a night to remember — a 50th anniversary celebration this month where we will be honoring distinguished alumni, dedicated leaders, and beloved teachers. With over 160 guests attending and many others sending warm wishes and generous support, we are deeply grateful.

To all who have supported HDS in a myriad of ways over the last 50 years, with your time, wisdom, or monetary gifts, thank you. Thank you for being the core of our community and the foundation of our future.

Although RSVPs for our 50th anniversary celebration are now closed, there are still ways to support our continued growth. You can make a gift at www.HDSAA.org or consider joining our Life & Legacy Circle by including Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor in your will or retirement account beneficiaries. Contact Tamar Jacobson at tjacobson@hdsaa.org for more information.. ■

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UMich to award the Wallenberg Medal to Vladimir Kara-Murza

The Russian politician, author, historian, and former political prisoner will deliver the 30th Wallenberg Lecture on November 4 at 4:30 p.m., when he will receive the 2025 Wallenberg Medal in Rackham Auditorium.

Vladimir Kara-Murza, a close colleague of the slain opposition leader Boris Nemtsov, served as deputy leader of the People's Freedom Party and was a candidate for the Russian Parliament. Leading diplomatic efforts on behalf of the opposition, Kara-Murza played a key role in the adoption of Magnitsky sanctions against top Russian officials by the United States, United Kingdom, European Union, Canada, and Australia. Magnitsky sanctions are governmental sanctions against foreign individuals who have committed human rights abuses or been involved in significant corruption. For this work he was twice poisoned and left in a coma; a joint media investigation by Bellingcat, *The Insider*, and *Der Spiegel* has determined that officers of the Russian Federal Security Services (FSB) were behind the attacks.

Vladimir Kara-Murza

In April 2022 Kara-Murza was arrested in Moscow for publicly denouncing the invasion of Ukraine and war crimes committed by Russian forces. Following a closed-door trial at the Moscow City Court, he was sentenced to 25 years for "high treason" and kept in solitary confinement at a maximum-security prison in Siberia. He was released in August 2024 as part of the largest East-West prisoner exchange since the Cold War, negotiated by the U.S. and German governments. Kara-Murza is a contributing writer at the *Washington Post*, winning the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for his columns written from prison, and has previously worked for *Echo of Moscow*, BBC, RTVi, *Kommersant*, *World Affairs,* and other media organizations.

He has directed three documentary films and is the author of or contributor to several books on Russian history and politics. Kara-Murza serves as vice-president at the Free Russia Foundation, as senior advisor at Human Rights First, and as senior fellow at the Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights in Montreal. He was the founding chairman of the Boris Nemtsov Foundation for Freedom and has led successful international efforts to commemorate Nemtsov, including with street designations in Washington, D.C., and London. Kara-Murza is a recipient of several awards, including the Council of Europe's Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, and is an honorary fellow at Trinity Hall, Cambridge. He holds an M.A. (Cantab.) in History from Cambridge. He is married, with three children.

"Like Raoul Wallenberg, Vladimir Kara-Murza has dedicated his life to defending democracy and human rights, exhibiting extraordinary courage and vision," said Sioban Harlow, chair of the Wallenberg Medal Executive Committee and Professor Emerita of Epidemiology, Obstetrics and Gynecology, and Global Public Health.

The Wallenberg Medal and Lecture honors the legacy of Raoul Wallenberg who graduated from U-M's College of Architecture in 1935 and saved the lives of tens of thousands of Hungarian Jews near the end of World War II. In 1944, at the request of Jewish organizations and the American War Refugee Board, the Swedish Foreign Ministry sent Wallenberg on a rescue mission to Budapest. Over the course of six months, Wallenberg issued thousands of protective passports and placed many thousands of Jews in safe houses throughout the besieged city. He confronted Hungarian and German forces to secure the release of Jews, whom he claimed were under Swedish protection, and saved more than 80,000 lives.

The Wallenberg Medal is administered by the Donia Human Rights Center. U-M awards the Wallenberg Medal to those who, through their actions and personal commitment, perpetuate Wallenberg's extraordinary accomplishments and human values, and demonstrate the capacity of the human spirit to stand up for the helpless, to defend the integrity of the powerless, and to speak out on behalf of the voiceless.

Recent Wallenberg Medal recipients include Nnimmo Bassey, executive director of the Health of Mother Earth Foundation and a global environmental activist (2024); Lucas Benitez, a co-founder of the Florida-based labor and human rights organization the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (2023); and Safa Al Ahmad, Saudi Arabian journalist and documentary filmmaker (2019). Notable medal recipients over the past 30 years include Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Bryan Stevenson, Miep Gies, John Lewis, Elie Wiesel, Dr. Denis Mukwege, and His Holiness Tenzin Gyatso, Fourteenth Dalai Lama of Tibet.

The Wallenberg Medal and Lecture ceremony is free and open to the public. ■

Benji Lovitt makes it ok to laugh again

*By Clara Silver, Executive Director, Temple Kol Ami, West Bloomfield*Temple Kol Ami of West B

Bloomfield, Michigan, welcomes Benji Lovitt on May 17 at 7 p.m. for a special event, "Seriously Funny: How Israelis Laugh to Keep from Crying." Comedian, author, and educator, Lovitt was born in Dallas, Texas, and has lived in Tel Aviv for the last 19 years. In his first appearance in Michigan since 2019, Lovitt will be bringing his unique blend of comedy and community as he combines a stand-up performance with an interactive presentation showing that it is ok to laugh at just about anything. Lovitt uses the psychology of comedy as a cathartic and therapeutic art, releasing tension in a way that allows the joke teller and the audience to heal. "Seriously Funny" will give the audience a break from daily stress and use humor to help process the painful events the Jewish community has faced since October 7.

Post-October 7, global events and recent events in America have made finding joy in the face of fear and sadness seem nearly impossible for many in the Jewish community. Lovitt explains that Jews, throughout history, have laughed to keep from crying. "Any fan of *The Producers* knows that even the darkest thing can be laughed at, if done appropriately. On October 7, many Israelis felt they would never laugh again. Just days later, the healing process commenced as, once again, Israelis slowly returned to humor to deal with the pain." Lovitt will show the audience how Israelis are using humor to cope and help the audience find their own hope and healing.

Since making aliyah in 2006, comedian Benji Lovitt has performed for audiences around the world including Jewish Community Centers, Birthright Israel, Jewish Federations, synagogues, and more. His perspectives have been featured on Israeli television and radio and in outlets such as *USA Today, Time Magazine*, BBC Radio, *The Atlantic*, and the *Times of Israel*. In 2023, Benji co-authored his first book, *Israel 201,* about the magic, mystery, and chaos of life in Israel, winner of the 2024 National Jewish Book Award, which Mayim Bialik calls "fabulous." Benji is a member of the Schusterman Foundation's ROI Community, a frequent presenter at Limmud conferences, and is the co-founder of "TLV Laughs," one of Israel's top stand-up shows, which features English-speaking comics from all over the world.

General admission to "Seriously Funny: How Israelis Laugh to Keep from Crying" is $54 per person and includes the presentation and post-show meet and greet. Sponsorship packages include pre-show dinner with Benji, premium seating, and more. Alcohol will be served and the presentation assumes a mature audience. The event will include a 50/50 raffle to help defray event costs. More information and online registration is available at www.tkolami.org or by calling Temple Kol Ami at (248) 661-0040. ■

Tales from Damascus at Federation's Annual Meeting

By Rachel Wall, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor will be holding its Annual Meeting on Wednesday, May 28, at 7 p.m. and invites the community to attend. The Annual Meeting offers an opportunity to celebrate the past year — and there is much to celebrate.

Headlining this year's Annual Meeting will be Rabbi Asher Lopatin, Federation's Director of Community Relations, as he shares about his historic visit to Damascus, Syria, earlier this year. Attendees will hear his exceptional storytelling of the small group of Jews with whom he traveled, the Syrian people he met along the way, and how the lessons of this trip can be applied to the local Ann Arbor area community.

In addition to this presentation, the Annual Meeting will celebrate the success of another Annual Community Campaign. Last year's Campaign raised more than $1.5 million for organizations that enrich Jewish life in Washtenaw County, Israel, and around the world. The final sum for the 2025 Campaign, as well as a breakdown of how those funds are allocated, will be announced at the Annual Meeting. Federation is excited at the prospect of exceeding last year's total.

Throughout April and May, Federation's two volunteer Allocations Committees — one dedicated to local and domestic causes, and one to Israel and overseas — will read proposals and hear presentations from organizations requesting funds for the 2025–2026 year. In mid-May, the Allocations Committees will make their recommendations to the Federation Board of Directors, detailing how funds raised by the 2025 Annual Community Campaign would be best distributed. The Board votes to approve those recommendations at its regularly scheduled meeting on May 19.

This year, the Allocations Committees are Chaired by Jeremy Bloom (local and domestic) and Levana Aronson (Israel and Overseas). For more information on the Allocations process and to see the full list of committee members, please visit jewishannarbor.org/about-us/community-impact. This is also where the allocations distributions from last year's Campaign can be reviewed, in the 2024 Annual Impact Report. The Impact Report gives an inside look at the difference the Campaign makes on our community.

The financial impact of the Federation would not be possible without those volunteers who give their valuable time to enrich the community. At the Annual Meeting, the community will honor those volunteers, especially the Board of Directors. At the meeting, we will thank those Board members whose terms are ending, and welcome incoming members. Community members present at the meeting will vote to elect the new Board. The full slate of Board members for the upcoming term can be found at JewishAnnArbor.org. Proposed changes to Federation's bylaws will also be up for approval by the community at the meeting.

Most of all, the Annual Meeting is an opportunity to thank all the generous donors to the 2025 Annual Community Campaign for their dedication to supporting Jewish life locally, in Israel and around the world. If you have not yet made a gift or pledge to the 2025 Annual Community Campaign, there is still time before the Board votes to approve allocations on May 19. Please consider visiting JewishAnnArbor.org to make your contribution today, or contact Federation's Communications & Development Director Rachel Wall at rachel@jewishannarbor.org or (734) 773-3533.

To register for the Annual Meeting on May 29, visit JewishAnnArbor.org. . ■

Rabbis compose statement of values for the current moment

At a time of fear and uncertainty over the direction of the nation, Jewish clergy around the country are speaking up about the importance of articulating and incorporating religious beliefs in shaping the current national dialogue.

"Many of us have felt deep anguish over the past few months," said Rabbi Fred N. Reiner, one of the organizers of the statement. "Today, in the administration's policies that are unfolding, we feel an absence of so many central religious beliefs that we teach and espouse. We hope that other religious leaders will also come forward with the beliefs and values that their denominations and communities hold and teach."

In a personal communication, Rabbi Emeritas of TBE in Ann Arbor, Robert Levy, wrote, "Here in D.C. I stay busy with non-congregational rabbinic work including organizing a group of retired rabbis who have settled in D.C., some for decades and others, like me, more recent transplants. In response to our angst with recent events that have shaken the country but especially D.C. where so many (former) federal workers live and where news consumption is a local passion, we produced a statement of values. And then we sought signatures more broadly. We have over 600 signatures and are now working to spread the word."

A 2025 Statement of Jewish Beliefs

In this time of swirling events and governmental chaos, it is important to remind ourselves of our core beliefs as American Jews. These are some of the values we hold dear and which guide our lives and our actions.

1. We believe that all people are the children of God, endowed with holiness, all equal in value. (Gen. 1:27)
2. We believe in welcoming the stranger, the alien in our midst, the one who lives with us. (Lev. 19:33) We are commanded to love the stranger as ourselves. We are a people of repeated migrations, descended from strangers in Egypt.
3. We believe in honesty, commanded not to bear false witness. (Ex. 20:13, Lev. 19:11)
4. We believe in listening respectfully, valuing the ideas of those who disagree, and seeking peace. (Avot 1:12, 1:18)
5. We believe in fairness in business and all transactions: not engaging in fraud, paying workers promptly, honestly representing what is offered. (Lev.19:13; 19:35–6)
6. We believe in respect for others, especially for the strangers among us, for elders and those less fortunate, and all who struggle. We are commanded not to take advantage of the weakness of others, not to place a stumbling block before the blind. (Lev. 19:32; 19:14) We feel it is important to engage in acts of kindness and believe that we are in relationship with all people and should behave with compassion and empathy. (Avot 1:2)
7. We call what we give to others tzedakah, giving based on justice. We believe in the importance of compassion, but what we give to others in need is based on seeking justice in society.
8. We believe in knowledge and the exchange of ideas, including minority viewpoints. We value learning and the advancement of knowledge, in science, in literature, sacred and secular. (Avot 1:16)
9. We believe in respecting and caring for our world, for tending the land and acting as dedicated stewards. (Gen 1:29–30 and Lev. 19:23 ff.)
10. We cherish the religious freedom in the United States and celebrate the diversity of beliefs and practices in our country. We deeply value the American Constitutional guarantees separating religion and state that have made possible the flourishing of all religions in our country. ■

Advocating for urgent and effective senior millage implementation

By Julie Grand, former Ann Arbor City Council Member, and Joan Lowenstein, former Ann Arbor City Council Member

As concerned citizens and taxpayers who care deeply about our community's most vulnerable older adults, we feel compelled to speak up and urge county leaders to implement the senior millage quickly, effectively, and with as little bureaucracy as possible. Our seniors — especially those who are low-income, isolated, or struggling to access essential resources — deserve immediate, thoughtful investment in community-based services that have already proven to work.

The bulk of the senior millage funds needs to go directly to existing community agencies that have a clear, measurable impact on older adults' lives. These organizations, with their established track records of providing critical safety net services, are the most reliable stewards of these funds. Why waste time and resources building new systems from scratch when there are already effective programs in place? This is about using taxpayer dollars wisely and getting help to those who need it most.

Safety net services are not just a feel-good measure; they are a practical necessity. Providing access to healthcare, housing, nutrition, transportation, social support, and economic assistance prevents crises before they happen. It's about ensuring older adults can maintain their well-being, independence, and quality of life. And it's far more cost-effective to support these services upfront than to pay the price of emergencies that could have been prevented.

We're particularly concerned that the county might waste precious time and money on building a bloated bureaucracy. Instead, what we need is a streamlined approach: a small, focused unit integrated into existing infrastructure, working directly with the people who know what they're doing. We need leadership from local community-based providers with real experience serving vulnerable seniors, not more government personnel trying to reinvent the wheel.

This process needs to move forward quickly. A simple, one-to-two-year funding opportunity for proven organizations would keep essential services running while also generating real data on which programs deliver the best results. From there, the county can make informed decisions about where future resources should go. A two-tiered funding approach — one level for high-capacity organizations with strong track records and another for smaller organizations — could ensure a balanced approach that serves the entire community.

The voters approved this millage to protect and enhance services for older adults. Let's honor that commitment by implementing it in the most efficient, practical way possible, drawing on the expertise of our local community-based providers who have been doing this work effectively for years. It's time to act quickly, smartly, and with a laser focus on the well-being of our seniors.

If you agree, please contact your Washtenaw County Commissioner to let them know how you feel.. ■

At Shavout, the Angels Came

by Todd

At Shavuot, the Angels ask
Have you forgotten why you are here?
Have you forgotten the dance?
Are you hiding behind closed doors?
Will you allow the Majestic doors of your heart
to open to the Torah of your life,
to accept the innate goodness within?
Are you willing to live in the Mystery
of Creation, of our Creation?
At Shavuot, The Angels said –
Take the necessary steps to reach up into Sinai,
to the spaces, to those places that are beyond the small self.
In goodness may you travel up your desert mountains and
swim down into the waters of your life, to do the work,
to receive what is offered—
When you open the Majestic doors of your heart
behind those doors you will
travel on your path into the Mystery
where the desert mountains become level
where the seas are calm.
You will find that is where the Promised land resides.
Come to the dance, be the dance.

Reprinted from Ritualwell.org

Connecting Israel and Ann Arbor through culture, holidays, and art

By Danielle and Lahav, the Ann Arbor ShinShinim

Danielle and Lahav came to Ann Arbor to strengthen the connections between the Ann Arbor Jewish community and Israel, sharing the Israeli atmosphere through informal education — interactive lessons that include music, culture, Israeli childhood games, and even food. They arrived in Ann Arbor in August 2024 for a service year as Israeli emissaries between their high school graduation and military service through the ShinShinim program of the international Jewish Agency for Israel. They share here what they've been up to around town recently.

March and April were busy months! We returned from our two-week homeland vacation in Israel at the beginning of March. During March and April, we were involved in many events for Purim and Passover, planning and executing plenty of exciting activities and new experiences for the community.

Purim fun & celebrations around the community

One of the most significant events during this period was the Israeli "Purimon" event we organized at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor.

The event was held for the entire school and featured a variety of activity stations spread throughout the building including a Fortune Teller, The Robbery (Laser Room), Falafel Target Toss, a Haunted Maze, and more. There was also a photo booth, popcorn, and cotton candy! Thanks to the incredible staff and the amazing parents who supported the preparations and volunteered during the event, we were able to bring it all to life. We're so grateful for everyone's help. We succeeded in sharing a fun and meaningful Israeli experience, and seeing the children leave with big smiles was the best reward of all.

In addition to the HDS event, we helped organize the "Purim at the Circus" event in collaboration with the JCC and Chabad. We assisted in planning the event, coming up with ideas for activity stations, decorating the venue, and more. We also participated in Purim events at Temple Beth Emeth (TBE), created Purim scrolls with children who attended our Jewish Storytimes at the Ann Arbor District Library, and visited the Purim event at Beth Israel Congregation (BIC).

And how could we forget the costumes we created for ourselves, which caused great excitement among the children who decided they wanted to eat it ... forgetting it was just a costume? We dressed as Bamba and Bissli!

Passover: From songs to Master Chef

For Passover, we did a fun music activity at TBE, teaching the song "Dayenu," where Danielle sang with the children and Lahav accompanied them on the piano. The children really enjoyed the special concept and the new version of the song from Israel that we introduced them to. Additionally, in the seventh grade, we held a Master Chef-style Passover lesson, in which the children competed in challenges to win ingredients for making matzo-chocolate balls. All the tasks were related to Passover, including a sack race (Plague of Frogs), building a pyramid of cups with eyes closed (Plague of Darkness), drinking a disgusting blood-colored beverage (Plague of Blood), and more.

At Storytimes at AADL, we created frog crafts and matzah covers with the children. The kids were exposed to many aspects of the Passover holiday, and we had the opportunity to meet new children and families that we hadn't met before!

Danielle and Lahav

Exploring Israeli Art: Kadishman, Geffen, and Goldberg

At HDS, we dedicated a month to Israeli artists. We introduced them to Kadishman, an Israeli painter and sculptor, known for his colorful sheep portraits. We worked together in art classes to create sheep.

We also introduced Jonathan Geffen, who was born in Nahalal, Ann Arbor's partner city in Israel, and is regarded as one of Israel's most influential poets. His book *The Sixteenth Sheep* was turned into a groundbreaking record, one of the best-selling of all time. The album was named so (with the playful title) because while lying in bed counting sheep, "the sixteenth sheep is the one I fall asleep with."

Another activity we led was about the poet Leah Goldberg, a recipient of the Israel Prize for Literature and Poetry. In that activity, we discussed her book *Apartment to Rent,* in which the relationship between animals sharing an apartment building reflects the idea of Israel's melting pot — bringing together people from various backgrounds, religious and secular, Jews and Arabs, Moroccans and Ashkenazim. The story emphasizes the importance of living together in one country and the need to give every person equal opportunity, regardless of their identity. This activity was prepared by the next generation of ShinShinim of Ann Arbor, who are already getting involved and excited about our work in the community! The new ShinShinim will arrive this summer, once our year of service has finished.

Interactive learning and field trip

Danielle and Lahav also joined HDS students on a field trip to the Ann Arbor City Hall and a fire station, which was a great informal experience that allowed them to get to know each other outside of their usual classroom routine.

At the JCC's Early Childhood Center, Danielle continued her weekly visits every Friday as a special guest for Shabbat. Together, they made challah and experienced the Shabbat atmosphere. Additionally, they learned songs for Passover, especially enjoying the frog song, which Danielle translated for them into Hebrew.

This month, Lahav also began teaching science lessons to fourth and fifth graders at HDS. These lessons are about an introduction to the world of science, understanding Israeli creativity, and later inventing and scientifically testing solutions to big and small challenges in Israel. This will be the children's final project.

Springtime travels and new family connections

After being generously hosted by Rabbi Josh and Sarah Raful Whinston for a wonderful six months, Danielle has moved to live with Andi Rich and her family. It has been an exciting experience for her getting to know another family in the community. They spend time together and create a warm and loving atmosphere. Danielle especially enjoys the presence of the dogs that take her on walks in this beautiful season … Speaking of seasons, we're really excited that spring is coming, and the endless winter is almost over!

Lahav's mother and sister came for a visit at the beginning of April and stayed almost until the end of the month. They visited Lahav's host family (Scott and Cindy Kellman), got to know the community institutions, and enjoyed spending time together as a family. Afterwards, they traveled together during the Passover vacation.

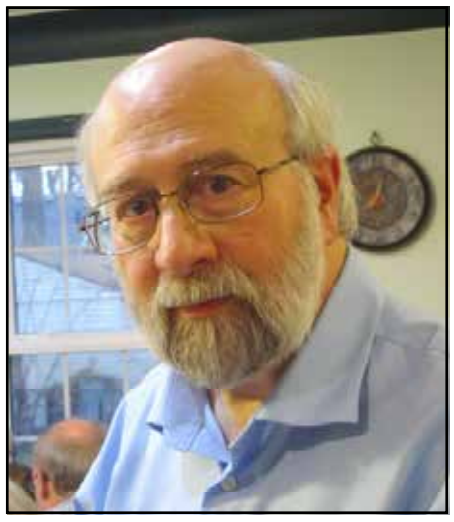
Danielle also traveled with her ShinShinim friends from Detroit, Cincinnati, and others to Florida for a long-awaited vacation! It's every Israeli's dream ... You can ask her about it — this will be her favorite topic of conversation for the next while!

Looking ahead: Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Lag Ba'Omer. We have a lot of work ahead of us, especially in May! We will participate in the community-wide events for Israel's Memorial Day and Independence Day and are planning a big community-wide event for Lag Ba'Omer with lots of activities, a big bonfire, Israeli kosher food, and guaranteed fun. We look forward to seeing you all there. More details will be published soon! ■

A short history of Jewish communal fund raising in Ann Arbor

By Benjamin Mordecai Ben-Baruch

In the early 1960s, most American Jewish communities raised communal funds through their local Jewish federations which typically allocated a small portion of these communal funds to the UJA (United Jewish Appeal). The UJA was founded in 1939 to raise funds for Jews in Europe and the Yishuv. Beginning as early as the 1890s, local Jewish communities in Boston, St. Louis, Chicago, and elsewhere formed federations, focused on the needs of Jews in their local communities.



Benjamin Mordecai Ben-Baruch

Until the 1960s, the Ann Arbor Jewish community had no local Jewish federation or coordinating body of any sort. Communal fund raising in Ann Arbor's Jewish community began in 1961 when a small group decided to raise funds for the UJA. The money UJA raised for Israel went to the Zionist "national institutions." For over two decades the only organized communal fundraising in the Ann Arbor Jewish community was the UJA campaign, and virtually all of the money raised left the local community to support Israel. The local Ann Arbor group was independent of the UJA. It raised money for UJA, but was not a part of UJA.

As the local Jewish community grew during the 1960s, there was a desire for a central place for the local organizations to talk to each other. So in 1967, the local UJA fundraising group and several of the membership groups formed the Jewish Community Council. This was also at the beginning of the transformation of American Jewry in general from a non-Zionist community to strong supporters of Israel through greatly increased contributions to the UJA.

Across the country local Jewish federations closely partnered with the UJA. But not in Ann Arbor, because there was no local federation, just periodic meetings of a Jewish Community Council. The general pattern in America was for the local Jewish federations to decide how much money they would allocate to fund local needs and local Jewish agencies and to the UJA for support of Israel and other overseas communities. In Ann Arbor the local UJA group decided whether they would support the Jewish Community Council and a few local projects.

By the mid-1980s the Ann Arbor Jewish Community's anomalous arrangement was being challenged both philosophically and practically. There was a need to serve the growing and under-funded local Jewish community, and the consensus about how American Jews should "support Israel" was changing. Two things happened in the mid-1980s to change local Jewish fundraising. First, the Jewish Community Council suggested that something like a local federation be created and that an increased percentage of the funds raised in the annual UJA campaign be used locally. The UJA group took the very strong stand that virtually all the money raised must go to Israel. Secondly, another group directly challenged the local UJA group's monopoly on communal fundraising in order to build a Jewish community center. The success of that campaign broke the local UJA group's monopoly over communal fundraising and demonstrated the community's desire for serving and funding local needs.

So in the mid-1980s a joint committee was formed with three members of the local UJA group and three members of the Jewish Community Council to try to create something like the federations in other American Jewish communities. (I was one of the three people selected by the Jewish Community Council to be on this joint committee.) The big sticking point in these negotiations was the amount of communal funds that would stay local. The UJA group was still insisting that virtually all funds raised should go to Israel via the UJA. A compromise could not be reached on this issue reflected in the first set of bylaws of the new Washtenaw County Jewish federation which mandated that at least 85% of the funds raised must go to the UJA. That was clearly an unworkable rule, and so within a few years the new federation's bylaws were changed so that only 50% had to go to the UJA.

A larger issue has lurked behind this debate about the split between funding local needs and supporting Israel: How should we be "supporting Israel"? Indeed, what should be the nature of our relationships to Israel? This issue is still being debated without a satisfactory resolution. And this issue threatens to cause a permanent schism within Judaism.

Prior to the war of 1948 most American Jews were either anti-Zionist or non-Zionist. And most Zionists had no intention of emigrating to Palestine. Being a Zionist in America meant "paying the shekel," joining a Zionist organization, and attending meetings and programs. Politically active Zionists engaged primarily in two related political campaigns: (1) raising awareness of and money for the Zionist project in Palestine, and (2) democratizing the American Jewish community. This latter struggle focused on changing local federations from philanthropies dominated by a few wealthy individuals to federations with somewhat democratic structures and welfare agencies that served the local community. Part of the latter political campaign was to get the local federations to allocate more funds to the Zionist project through its central fundraising arms (the UJA/Keren ha-Yesod and the JNF).

Between 1948 and 1967 American Jewry was mostly non-Zionist but viewed the Zionist project in Israel favorably. During the McCarthy era (early 1950s), Israel was an embarrassment to some because it was led by two socialist parties that were members of the Second International. Nevertheless, it became easier for Zionists to persuade Jewish communities to give money to the UJA and JNF partly because the money was now seen as going to a nation and not to a federation of Zionist political parties. The UJA/Keren ha-Yesod and JNF became quasi-governmental agencies responsible for providing government services to Jews in Israel and for managing public land for the Jews. And local federations were amenable to allocating small amounts to the UJA.

After June 1967 supporting Israel through the UJA was widely supported. Some American Jewish organizations began defining themselves as Zionist and many (perhaps a majority) of American Jews also defined themselves as either Zionists or supporters of Israel. Local Jewish federations strengthened their partnerships with the UJA (or began such partnerships) to do fundraising for both the local Jewish community and for Israel. Many Jewish federations were allocating 50% or more of the funds they raised to either the UJA or to Israel education and programing locally. As I wrote above, Ann Arbor did not have a local federation, only a group dedicated to raising money for the UJA until 1986.

In April 1989 the Ann Arbor chapter of New Jewish Agenda, a national organization formed in 1980 as a "Jewish voice among progressives and a progressive voice among Jews," published a guide to ethical Jewish giving which had two criteria for giving to Israel:

The distribution of funds should not discriminate between Jewish and Arab citizens of Israel, and

The money should not support Israel's occupation of the West Bank and Gaza.

The UJA and JNF fail on both counts.

The Zionist consensus among American Jews was strained as Israel's occupation and settlement of the Palestinian territories continued and was further strained when a right-wing nationalist government came to power in 1977. American Jews questioned how and what we were supporting in Israel and the ways in which we related to Israel. Giving money directly to the Israeli government via the UJA became problematic for an increasing number of Jews who were also beginning to learn that UJA funds bolstered the two-tiered Israel system of providing state benefits. The occupation and settlement policies made Israel's discrimination against Palestinians, including Palestinian citizens of Israel, transparent. And the rise of the right-wing nationalists in Israeli politics meant that Israel was politically dominated by factions that were not committed to democracy. On one hand local federations were solidifying their partnership with the UJA, and on the other hand this partnership was being questioned by an increasing number of Jews who wanted Israel to be a truly democratic state of all of its people and were opposed to supporting the occupation and the expansion of Jewish settlements — which is where most of the UJA/Keren ha-Yesod funds went.

As the occupation and settlement continued and as the repression of Palestinians became harder to ignore, financially supporting the State of Israel became increasingly tendentious. The compromise was to divert a small amount of money being sent to Israel to organizations other than the UJA such as the New Israel Fund (NIF). Unlike monies donated to the UJA and JNF, NIF funds do not go to supporting the occupation and settlement, and instead go directly to specific projects and grassroots organizations including both Jewish and Palestinian groups. Over time the proportion of community funds going to Israel has decreased and the proportion going to the UJA has similarly decreased.

Across all American Jewish communities there is both a reckoning and a hardening of attitudes. Beyond the division between Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists is the question of how we should be relating to Israel. The centrality of Israel in modern Jewish life is no longer being debated as an ideological issue because it is an empirical fact. Half of the world's Jews live in Israel. But half of Israel's population is not Jewish. The model of relating to Israel by supporting the State of Israel (which in 2018 declared itself an ethno-nationalist state for Jews only) is no longer viable. Our relations to the Israel can no longer be bonds of political solidarity with the state. Our relations with Israel have to be bonds of peoplehood with those Jewish communities, organizations, and institutions which share our Jewish values and our vision of the future. This requires reevaluating how we give money to Israel/Palestine and who the recipients are. This reevaluation will inevitably lead to further conflicts and changes in Ann Arbor's communal fundraising.

Benjamin Ben-Baruch has a B.A. from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an M.A. from Teachers College, Columbia University. He had a fellowship in Jewish education at the Melton Research Center of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America. He was a Jewish educator working for the Jewish Welfare Federation of Detroit (United Hebrew Schools and the Fresh Air Society) before entering graduate school at UM where he earned graduate degrees in Sociology and modern Jewish History. He lived in Ann Arbor from 1978–2011 and was a member of New Jewish Agenda and its Ethical Jewish Giving Project. He served for two years on the Jewish Community Council and represented it on the joint committee that created the local Jewish federation. A third generation Reconstructionist, he was a founding member of the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation and its religious school director for two years. ■

Six local projects awarded grants for collaboration and innovation

By Jewish Federation Staff

The Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor is delighted to announce six local initiatives awarded grants for collaboration and innovation in the local Jewish community. Two grants were awarded from the Zelma Weisfeld Fund for Culture and Education, three from Federation's Community Engagement Fund, and one project was funded through both grants.

The Community Engagement Fund is supported by the Annual Community Campaign of the Jewish Federation to encourage organizations and individuals to work collaboratively on new, innovative initiatives that cultivate a strong, engaged, connected, caring, vibrant, and enduring Jewish community in Washtenaw County. The Zelma Weisfeld Fund for Culture & Education is made possible through a bequest from Zelma Weisfeld z"l.

"I'm delighted with the success of our Community Engagement Fund and Zelma Weisfeld Fund allocations." said Federation CEO Eileen Freed. "The support provided by these funds has fostered collaboration and enabled the development of engaging community programs to strengthen our community."

The next round of Community Engagement Fund grants will be awarded this fall. The deadline for submission is August 18. Grant requests of $1,000–$5,000 will be considered and must be submitted by a partnership of three or more collaborators. Applicants are asked to submit a letter of intent to Kadi Swerdlow (kadi@jewishannarbor.org) by July 28. Decisions will be made within one month of the grant deadline.

The full application for both grants is available at JewishAnnArbor.org/Grants. For more information or to inquire, contact Eileen Freed at eileenfreed@jewishannarbor.org or (734) 773-3537.

Recovery Seder

The third annual Recovery Seder, which took place April 13, is a partnership between Temple Beth Emeth (TBE), Beth Israel Congregation (BIC), Jewish Family Services (JFS), and the Lior Project. This seder is a community effort led by JFS to address issues of mental health and addiction in the Jewish community. Building on the success of last year's program, the Recovery Seder is geared towards meeting the spiritual and religious needs of members of the recovery and 12-step communities. It enables participants to navigate aspects of the traditional ceremony that can be more challenging, and to explore what freedom at this season means to someone who is struggling with freeing themselves from addiction.

A Collaborative Community Art Experience with Hillel Smith

On March 23, a unique and meaningful art event was led by future social workers of the Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) in partnership with U-M Hillel and the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor. This project was inspired by the tension and tragedy in Israel and on campus, which has made an indelible mark on the U-M student community. Renowned visual artist Hillel Smith guided participants in curating a collaborative art piece that reflects the strength and resilience of this community over the past year and half. Together, attendees explored creativity, connection, and community through art. The final product will be a lasting tribute, finding its permanent home in U-M Hillel. One JCLP student, Julia Diskin, said of the project, "This event felt like a full circle moment, a way to capture both the hardship and resilience we hold as individuals and as a collective, and our ever-enduring sense of hope for a better future."

Israeli Soldiers Delegation

Ann Arbor hosted a delegation of two IDF soldiers visiting from Israel leading up Yom HaZikaron (Israel's Memorial Day) on April 25–30. The visitors engaged the community by sharing their personal experiences of the recent war in Israel as they defended against Hamas in the south and Hezbollah to the north. The delegation had seven engagements scheduled over those five days in Ann Arbor, including: visiting with Chabad and Ann Abor Orthodox Minyan, participating in the Zekelman Holocaust Center Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony, and visiting with students at Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor.

The Michaelson Art Gallery Party

On May 1, the Federation in collaboration with the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor and Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor will be hosting an Israeli Block Party featuring art from The Michaelson Art Gallery. This community event will be held at the JCC to celebrate Israeli art. It will include a variety of art forms, including visual art and live music. The art on display is from the Michaelson Art Gallery, located in Tel Aviv and run by Amnon Michaeli. The gallery's work is made up of a wide variety of Israeli art styles and eras, combining both "good old and familiar" art elements. The celebration will bring this unique art practice to the Ann Arbor Jewish community, promoting greater cultural education and unity between American and Israeli Jews. In addition to the cutting edge visual Israeli art of the Michaelson Art Gallery, the party will feature a live musical performance from The Tel Aviv Band, who blend musical and visual arts in a lively and engaging way. The party will also include a variety of stations with activities, each representing a place in Israel and promoting hands-on cultural education. There will be food, games, and activities. The party will be for all ages and include childcare, making the event accessible to families.

Jazz for JCOR

JCOR (Jewish Congregations Organizing for Resettlement) hosted their annual Jazz for JCOR benefit concert on March 16. The concert featured The Cliff Monear Ensemble with vocalist Sarah D'Angelo, with the goal of raising funds for their resettlement program. The event drew over 80 attendees.

A participant in the JFS Resettlement Co-Sponsorship Program, JCOR is a collaboration of six Jewish congregations working together and in partnership with Jewish Family Services to support resettlement of newly arrived refugee families through their first year in the U.S. Member congregations include the Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan, Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Beth Israel Congregation, Jewish Cultural Society, Pardes Hannah, and Temple Beth Emeth, along with the Jewish Federation which serves as JCOR's fiduciary.

Community Needs Donation Drive

In response to the increasing need for resettlement and food access support — brought on by federal funding changes — Jewish Family Services is partnering with the Jewish community to launch a Community Needs Donation Drive. The drive, coordinated in collaboration with Temple Beth Emeth, Beth Israel Congregation, and the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, will mobilize community members to support vulnerable families. Each congregation will host a food and supply drive, culminating in at least one volunteer event at JFS where congregation members will package the donated items for client families. Packages will be distributed by agency staff through the pantry and case managers. This program will help to engage members of the Jewish community to feel involved and connected to each other, while working together on something greater. It will also provide a great opportunity to share the work of JFS and engage individuals and groups in future volunteer opportunities at the agency to support future engagement.

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All ages and stages welcome on Israel trip

By Rachel Wall, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Traveling to Israel right now may seem like a questionable choice at best. But with the right precautions, thoughtful planning, and communal support, it can be a transformational opportunity. That's why the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community is planning a 10-day trip together, leaving December of this year.

A community-wide endeavor, this trip is being jointly planned by the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor, the JCC of Greater Ann Arbor, Beth Israel Congregation, Temple Beth Emeth, and Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor. Additional partners include Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation, Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan, and Chabad of Ann Arbor.

The trip is designed for participants ages nine and up and will be an opportunity to experience Israel's rebuilding efforts firsthand, understand one's own relationship with Israel, explore the nuance of life in Israel, enjoy delicious food and new friends, and travel with local community leaders. As an intergenerational trip, there will be dedicated activities for children and teens, as well as opportunities for adults to connect with one another outside of their families. Those traveling with children, grandchildren, no children, a partner, friend, or solo are all welcome. Regardless of one's stage in life, participants will bring deep new relationships home to Michigan.

Federation's CEO Eileen Freed has visited Israel twice since October 2023, so she knows how pivotal a trip like this can be for Americans' understanding of Israel's past and present. "It's very hard for us to comprehend what it's like to live in Israel, from here in Michigan," Freed says. "There is so much complexity and nuance that comes to life when you're there, seeing the places and talking with real people. Even if you've been to Israel before, a trip like this can help anyone better understand their own relationship to the land and people."

The theme of the trip is "Israel with New Eyes," and it is intended for both first-time Israel travelers and those who have visited multiple times. While this trip is not specifically focused on the atrocities of 10/7/23, there will be no denying that the attack and ensuing war have shaped present-day life in Israel. As such, safety and security will be of the upmost importance throughout the trip. Trip leaders will be in constant communication with security and intelligence personnel, and, while unlikely, activities on any given day could change if significant safety concerns arise.

Highlights from the trip's itinerary include major cities and sites like Jerusalem, Tel Aviv, and the Dead Sea, as well as more personalized and unique opportunities. Some of those specialized stops include an intimate conversation with an Israeli political correspondent and age-appropriate Jewish learning programs at The Shalom Hartman Institute, which is a leading center of Jewish thought and education. Plus, no Ann Arbor area trip to Israel would be complete without a visit to Moshav Nahalal, Ann Arbor's partnership community through the international Jewish Agency for Israel, leading to tours of Israel's agricultural north.

A trip like this can be a significant financial investment for families. That's why the Jewish Federation is subsidizing the cost for all participants with a generous grant from the Susan L. Lichter Memorial Scholarship Fund. In addition, the Federation is offering a subsidy of up to $1,000 specifically for teens who participate in this trip with their families and who complete a subsidy application.

For all trip details and to express interest in a personalized registration link, visit www.JourneysInternational.com/ann-arbor-israel-2025. Individual questions may be emailed to info@jewishannarbor.org. ■

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Mexican Syrian Jewish traditions and Café Guanajuato

By Miranda Jackel, August 26, 2024. This story was originally published in the Forward in August 2024. To get the Forward's free email newsletters delivered to your inbox go to https://forward.com/newsletter-signup/.

Clairette Atri Mizahi

Whenever Clairette Atri Mizrahi constructs a thought, you can see the joyous, rigorous fervor in her. She has the sort of zeal for language that is the unmistakable stamp of a writer. A poet, playwright, and scholar, she traces her creative instinct back to her youth.

"I think I was writing poetry, but I never named it that — I didn't have the words," she told me. "At some point, somebody told me, 'Yeah, you write poetry.'"

Currently a PhD candidate in a Psychology program at CUNY, Atri Mizrahi, 38, is the author of *Nunca estás y estás,* a play that was selected for Cimientos, a play development program at IATI, an East Village-based bilingual theater that was founded in 1968. She began working on the play at NYU in 2018.

"I just had to write it," she said. "I just wrote what I had — right next to me, you know? Like, that world that is both Arab and Jewish. That ambivalent mother love and grandmother love, and all this woman love that is both loving and full of possibilities and painful, and at the core of the wound."

A nonlinear, lyrical work, the play is set entirely on a Friday afternoon, as a Mexican Syrian Jewish mother seeks to prepare Shabbat dinner while the threat of an earthquake is imminent. This anticipation and fear of collapse is both literal and metaphorical. Atri Mizrahi said she "wanted to show this particular world in Mexico City, where there is always a threat of an earthquake, of a collapse, and ask: What is about to collapse?"

Through the two women at the center of the play, called Mayor and Menor, Atri Mizrahi subverts conventions of character. The actors inhabiting the roles must seamlessly move between the conversations that occur between a mother and a daughter and those of two lovers. She described this as an "experiment" in attempting to "modify what we know about the mother preparing Shabbat dinner with her two kids," asking "What would it tell us about that mother figure that we would otherwise just see in her domestic duties?"

"I didn't relate to what was termed Jewish"

Rejection of binary identity is intrinsic to Atri Mizrahi's work, because it's at the heart of her own lived experience. She grew up and went to college in Mexico City, and is the daughter of two Syrian Jewish parents. Her maternal grandmother was born in Beirut and arrived in Mexico with her family in 1959.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, she feels ambivalent about labels. She grew up, she said, "surrounded by Arabness."

"I knew I didn't relate to what was termed Jewish. I have a hard time with that umbrella term because it is more than often not me; it is a white, European Jew," she told me. She adds she came to the realization that she was an Arab Jew relatively recently, because "in Mexico, it was not a contradiction to be Jewish and Arab."

Throughout our conversation, she stressed that her task — particularly in the context of writing plays — is not that of representation, but, instead, "trying to enact this world that is still here, and has been so threatening and threatened since the dichotomization of the Arab and the Jew."

With "second-generation Arab Jews passing away," Atri Mizrahi believes that all of her work "lies within the tension" she experiences "between grasping to keep this world and trusting that this world will always be there, emerging."

Atri Mizrahi describes the world she grew up in as one "that is, in a way, before and beyond Zionism, and that is threatened by nationalist projects, by colonial projects, by Zionism, by Arab nationalism," though, she contests, "it can never be taken away from us, because here it is present. I see it when I go to my grandmother's house."

A place for drifters and wanderers

As Atri Mizrahi worked to revise her play, she was also cooking many of her grandmother's recipes, which inspired her to center the play around jamud batata, or la comida de los viernes — a dish that is made in Mexican Syrian Jewish homes every Friday. It's a broth with ingredients such as potato, lime, celery, onion and parsley, which is eaten alongside rice, vermicelli and peas.

Atri Mizrahi also recalls her grandmother "making kibbes with her hands," describing the preparation of the Lebanese Syrian meat pockets as "a powerful and erotic gesture."

Her grandmother's cooking has even made its way into her scholarship, in which Atri Mizrahi is offering the notion of a dissertation as a place — specifically, Café Guanajuato, which was open from the '30s through the '70s, where Syrian Jewish men in Mexico City played taaule (backgammon).

Located in Colonia Roma, which has today become significantly gentrified thanks in large part to a high concentration of transplants and tourists from the U.S., Atri Mizrahi learned about the café when she walked past it with a friend, who informed her of its history. They noticed a bright orange "For Rent" sign in front of it.

In speaking to her neighbors, who had lived near Café Guanajuato when it was still in business, the refrain she continuously heard was "that it was a place for drifters or wanderers." This resonated for Atri Mizrahi who had discovered the building while wandering, something she connects to the idea of the Wandering Jew, which she likens to the Arab Jewish experience.

"The modern state of Israel presents itself as the ingathering of Jews, as the end to that wandering," she told me, adding that the opposite was true for Jews of the Ottoman Empire whose wandering "was a result of this nation-state of Israel — this political project and Zionism, because we were uprooted from those lands where we had been for 2,000 years."

The process of reopening Café Guanajuato has ignited questions within Atri Mizrahi about the distinction between being "not allowed" versus "left out." Atri Mizrahi herself would not have been welcome at the original Café Guanajuato; only men were allowed. She envisions a new Café Guanajuato as an intergenerational community center, one where there will be readings and performances, and kibbes will be served.

"I think it would be beautiful to serve my grandmother's food, and have, like, a workshop of how to do kibbes," she said.

Atri Mizrahi is inspired by the possibility of producing *Nunca estás y estás* as a component of her dissertation, or at Café Guanajuato itself. The creative act, it seems, is her way of holding on to a world that is increasingly vulnerable, but gently enough that it is able to "proliferate" — a refrain to which she regularly and emphatically returned in our conversation. "If worlds can be made and formed through this work, and through — then that — that is more radical than pointing out and criticizing — for me." She asserts, "It's a way of resisting — by doing, and by inhabiting this world."

Miranda Jackel is a New York-based critic, dramaturg, and a proud member of LMDA (Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas). ■

We Want To Know Why

Jacqueline Jules

Like the animals in Noah's ark
Everything walks by its mate.
There is no Light without Dark.
No Large without Small.

A front and a back to everything.
Hard, Soft. Hot, Cold. Healthy, Sick.

Still, we want to know why

Up is defined by Down.

Joy sits on a seesaw with Grief.

We are Moses on the mountain
begging to behold a Presence;
allowed only a glimpse
as we cower in the cleft of a rock.

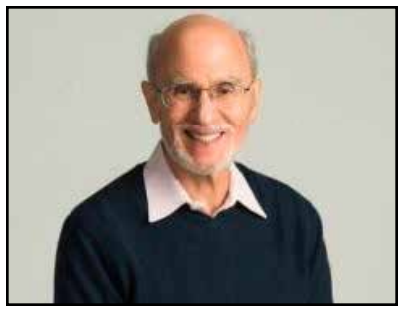
Humbled, we climb down,
stone tablets clutched to our chest,
lay them tenderly in the tabernacle
to carry on weary shoulders,
through years in the wilderness,
always pining for the Divine Face
we won't be permitted to see.

Reprinted from Ritualwell.org

Originally published in Itzhak Perlman's Broken String *(Evening Street Press, 2016)*

May at Beth Israel

Everyone is welcome to join Beth Israel for services, classes, and events. Services are being held in person and virtually, unless otherwise noted on the calendar. Below is a list of the links to participate virtually in services at Beth Israel. Beth Israel is live streaming services on the Beth Israel YouTube channel (Beth Israel Congregation AA MI). All links are also available on the Beth Israel homepage (www.bethisrael-aa.org). Please note that passwords are used. Contact the office to get the passwords at office@bethisrael-aa.org.



Dr. Victor Liebermain

Immigration Rights and Wrongs: Policy and Enforcement Changes During Trump 2.0!
Sunday, May 4, at 1 p.m.
Join Brad Maze, Immigration Attorney, and Margo Schlanger, Wade H. and Dores M. McCree Collegiate Professor of Law, University of Michigan, to learn about the current administration's policy changes for immigration. Discussion will include recent changes to immigration policy enforcement. Registration requested on the BIC website.

Aura of Kabbalat Shabbat

Friday, May 9, at 6 p.m.
A Jewish Renewal-inspired singing service led by Rabbi Aura Ahuvia. The choir, dubbed the "Holy Levites," will be holding a rehearsal at 5:30 p.m. leading right up to and seamlessly into services. All are welcome to attend.

Youth Services

Tot Shabbat & Mini Minyan

Saturdays, May 10 and 24, at 11 a.m.
Preschoolers begin to learn and love Judaism through storytelling, singing, and hands-on activities. Families join for songs, stories, and more in an interactive service for tots. Tot Shabbats are led by either Katie Shelef or John McLaughlin. Mini Minyan is a slower learner's service for elementary school age children. The service will include Shabbat prayers and a "D'var and Discussion" in place of the Torah service. Mini Minyan is led by the Youth and Family Director Ben Brent.

Youth Group Events in May
Chaverim (Third–Fifth Grade)
Chaverim Event
Friday, May 9, at 6:30 p.m.

Gesher (Sixth–Eighth Grade)
Gesher Event
Wednesday, May 21, at 4:30 p.m.

USY (Ninth–12th Grade)
USY Star Wars
Sunday, May 4, at 5:30 p.m.

ISRAEL360 Presents: Dr. Victor Lieberman - The Mideast Conflict: Where Has It Been and Where Is It Going?
Monday, May 1,2 at 7:30 p.m.
Dr. Victor B. Lieberman, Raoul Wallenberg Distinguished University Professor at University of Michigan, will discuss "The Mideast Conflict: Where has it been? Where is it going?" With a Q and A session. Register on the BIC website.

Shabbat Limmud with Rabbi Dobrusin
Saturday, May 17, at 9 a.m.
Shabbat Limmud is an opportunity for informal and lively discussion on Parashat HaShavua, the Torah portion of the week, over coffee and cake. We meet in the Beth Israel library before Shabbat morning services at 9 a.m. and will conclude at 9:45. Rabbi Dobrusin will facilitate the discussion and all texts will be provided. We invite you to join us for a stimulating start to Shabbat morning!

Talmud Study with Rabbi Dobrusin (via Zoom)
Mondays at 4 p.m. (except May 26)
The class meets on Zoom on Monday afternoons from 4–5:15 beginning February 3. We will read the text in the original Hebrew or Aramaic with an accompanying English translation and discuss the text in English. No familiarity with Hebrew or prior experience studying Talmud is required. This winter and spring, we will study from chapter 1 of the tractate Megillah which deals with laws and traditions relating to the reading of the Megillah on Purim but addresses many different subjects including midrashim on the book of Esther and traditions relating to the reading of the Torah among others. All are welcome! Zoom link is on the BIC website.

Theology Book Club — Online
Wednesdays at 7 p.m.
Beth Israel Congregation's Theology Book Club welcomes you to join them to read together and discuss books on Jewish thought and beliefs. The books are in English. Contact Paul Shifrin at (248) 514-7276 for more information.

In Person and Online Services

Minyan
Sundays at 9:30 a.m. in the M&M Chapel and online
Sundays at 7:45 p.m. online only
Mondays at 7:45 p.m. online only
Tuesdays at 7:45 p.m. online only
Wednesdays at 7:45 p.m. online only
Thursdays at 7:45 p.m. online only

Friday Evening Services — in person and virtual
Kabbalat Shabbat Service at 6 p.m.

Shabbat Morning Services — in person and virtual
Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. ■

Rabbi Aharon Goldstein

"And you shall love your fellow as yourself."

By Rabbi Aharon Goldstein, Chabad of Ann Arbor

On the Shabbat of May 10, the Torah portion, Kedoshim, begins with G-d's command to Moses to tell the Jewish people, "You must be holy, since I am G-d your L-rd and I am holy." The Torah portion contains a number of mitzvot between a person and his fellow man, including the mitzva of ahavat Yisrael, loving your fellow Jew for no other reason than that he is Jewish. The Torah states, "And you shall love your fellow as yourself." This is one of the basic foundations of Chasidism, as established by the Baal Shem Tov. Every Jew is obligated to treat his fellow Jew with ahavat Yisrael, giving of himself to others and influencing them in a positive way.

When a Jew acts with ahavat Yisrael and draws his brother near, both parties derive benefit. The same relationship exists between the rich man who gives tzedaka (charity) and the poorer recipient. The poor man has profited in that he now has money, and the rich man has profited because G-d will surely grant him additional blessing. It "pays" for the wealthy man to observe the mitzva of tzedaka!

Yet this is also true when the wealth involved is spiritual, when a person who possesses knowledge and good character traits shares them with another Jew. For not only does the recipient derive benefit, but G-d will certainly provide the donor with all he is lacking.

How are we supposed to fulfill the commandment to love our fellow Jew? In the same way a clever merchant conducts his business. A successful merchant doesn't sit in his house and wait until the public hears he has something to sell. Rather, he opens a store in the best possible location and hangs up a big sign advertising his wares. But even that is not enough. The merchant then goes about promoting the quality of his merchandise and persuades people to become his customers. He tries very hard to interest them in buying large quantities of his product.

So too must be our involvement in the mitzva of ahavat Yisrael. We cannot sit and wait to see if an opportunity to fulfill this commandment comes our way. We mustn't idly bide our time until others seek our help. Like the successful merchant, we must go out into the world searching for "customers" and convince them to "buy." We must go out of our way to do a favor for a fellow Jew, explaining the importance of Torah and mitzvot and bringing him to the study of Chasidut.

But even that is insufficient! Our influence on our Jewish brethren must be so effective that they in turn begin to exert their own positive influence on others. ■

Revitalizing a tradition with a Black-Jewish Freedom Seder

By Rebecca Rich, Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

On March 25, over 80 Black and Jewish people of all ages came together at the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor to celebrate their joint journeys to freedom through the lens of a Passover Seder. The Freedom Seder is a concept dating back to 1969, when Jewish activist Arthur Waskow brought together Black and Jewish people in commemoration of the first anniversary of the death of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and in protest of persisting racial inequality. Many Freedom Seders have been held around the country since. The greater Ann Arbor community held its first Freedom Seder in 1992, which continued for a few years afterwards. This year's Freedom Seder aimed to revitalize that tradition and put on the first local Freedom Seder in about 30 years.

To realize this goal, the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor's Jewish Community Relations Committee convened a committee consisting of both Black and Jewish community members: Federation's Community Relations Director Rabbi Asher Lopatin and Graduate Student Intern Rebecca Rich, plus Pastor Carnel Richardson of the Metropolitan Memorial Baptist Church and community members Rena Basch, Deborah Greene (local Jewish People of Color Network), Nancy Margolis, and LaTina Saba. Together, this committee worked to create a brand-new haggadah bringing together Jewish and Black traditions and to coordinate the logistics of the night. Throughout the process, an emphasis was put on collaboration and equal representation.

Our Own Thing Chorale Fonder Willie Patterson takes his seat after being recognized

The seder included many creative elements, including a non-traditional seder plate containing symbolic foods of both Black and Jewish cultures and a menu with a variety of cultural foods such as cornbread and collard greens, expertly prepared from scratch by the JCC's in-house chef Carly Balmer. There were also a number of prayers and creative readings compiled from both cultures, led by prominent community members such as Michigan State Representative Morgan Foreman, Federation CEO Eileen Freed, and Ann Arbor NAACP president Andre Watson.

Throughout the program, participants were given the chance to learn, reflect, and connect with each other. A favorite activity of the night was one connected to the 10 plagues in Egypt, where participants were encouraged to write down on small sheets of paper and then crumple or tear up their own personal plagues, which Rabbi Lopatin then brought home to use to burn his chametz (leftover traces of bread before Passover).

Overall, it was a fulfilling, exciting event — the room was filled with the energy and warmth of community, new friends, and shared stories.

To be part of planning next year's Freedom Seder, email jcrc@jewishannarbor.org. To learn more about the work of the Jewish Federation and JCRC, visit JewishAnnArbor.org/Engagement.. ■

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On the 80th anniversary of the liberation at Geislingen

By Michael S. Simon

It is an honor to tell the story of my mother, Hildegard L. Simon, nee Lustig, on the anniversary of the liberation of the slave labor camp at Geislingen. I feel especially humbled to represent the survivors and families, and I hope that my story will touch on the experiences of all the women who worked here as slave laborers. For me, an important date is May 27, 1944, the day my mother, at age 16, stepped off a cattle car with her family onto the platform at Auschwitz-Birkenau. That day began a trajectory of the most unimaginable horror; however through her strength and resilience, Hilde showed us how she could carry the weight of that horror and never lose her capacity for love and for hope.

Hilde was born in Vienna on April 11, 1928. Living with her mother, father, brother, grandparents, and aunt, she had a wonderful childhood. Trips to the mountains, Jewish school, magazines at her father's newsstand, friends and other relatives, all precious memories. In the summer, she loved traveling to visit her father's family in Nagykanizsa, Hungary.

Times changed. It is now late in the 1930s. With her ears glued to the door, she heard the hushed voices of her parents discussing news coming out about the Nazis and the threatened invasion. Hilde recounted how she was too young to read the newspaper but still felt tension in the air.

On March 13, 1938, the Anschluss or annexation of Austria occurred. Hilde stood at her father's newsstand, saw German soldiers march by, and heard Hitler speaking, likely the declaration of the annexation delivered from Vienna's Helden Platz Square. As the days went on, she watched soldiers force older Jewish men to clean the streets. Her parents had to wear badges labeling them as foreigners.

Two weeks later, Hilde's grandparents accompanied her family to the station and said their goodbyes as the family boarded a 4 a.m. train to Hungary. Imagine what it was like for Hilde's family, early in the morning, in Nazi-ruled Vienna, to leave their grandparents behind. The train ride was without incident until German soldiers came on board at a small station, demanding to know if anyone had a gun. As Hilde recounted, "We didn't have a gun, why would we have a gun?" At that moment, her 8-year-old brother piped up, "I have a gun". As it turns out it was a toy water gun, but the soldiers forced the family from the train, made them remove their clothing, and searched them for weapons. In Hilde's words, "For me, at that time, this was the most humiliating thing that ever happened to me, because you know, I was just a little girl."

The family boarded the next train. When they arrived in Nagykanizsa, Hilde's uncle met them and took them to her grandmother's house. In Nagykanizsa, the family ran a fine tailoring business and lived in town for over a century. For the next five years, this city was a refuge for Hilde's family, though they never overcame leaving Hilde's other grandparents in Vienna. There was also her mother's

cough, starting sometime after arriving in Nagykanizsa. On March 12, 1941, when Hilde was not yet 13, her mother, my grandmother, died of tuberculosis. During this period, her grandparents from Vienna were relocated to Poland. Her maternal uncle and his family in Prague were deported to Theresienstadt and, two days later, sent to Poland. They were all killed early in 1942.

Hilde often spoke about Erzsebet, one of her closest friends who was Catholic. Hilde said that she did not have a problem with anyone's religion; the important thing was whether they were good people. Yet in her testimony, Hilde described the town's deep antisemitism — men displaying their hatred by wearing green ties, and children chasing her home from school shouting "Dirty Jew." Hilde said in those circumstances, it was crucial to keep walking proudly, head held high.

The Germans occupied Nagykanizsa in March 1944. Yellow stars were mandated, and by April 26, all 1,800 Jewish individuals were relocated to a designated ghetto. Hilde remembered sharing orange marmalade with her grandmother on their last morning at home, something she could never bring herself to eat again.

Hilde's family was transported by cattle car to Auschwitz, arriving May 27, 1944. Upon arrival, Hilde walked with her grandmother and great-aunt to ask a tall, handsome soldier what would happen to them. She later learned that the soldier was Josef Mengele. Her younger brother, grandmother, and great-aunt were sent immediately to the gas chambers.

In July 1944, Hilde was transported to Geislingen to work at the WMF factory. To increase arms production, the company detained and forced over nine hundred Hungarian Jewish women, otherwise destined for death, to work. Imagine Hilde, who is only 16, never having worked in a factory, assigned to her first shift at midnight. Exhausted from worry, Hilde fell asleep. While sleeping, her finger accidentally slipped into the machine, and she was injured. A soldier walking by saw what had happened, and took her to a doctor, who, rather than stitching her wound, crudely sawed off the injured part. So as not to draw attention, Hilde only allowed herself to cry at night when she was alone. Later in Geislingen, Hilde recalled how her barrack Kapo, a former convict, suddenly lifted an innocent girl who was standing in line, and threw her, for no apparent reason, into a pit, to her death. This was HiIde's most haunting memory. Unbeknownst to her, in January 1945, her father, my grandfather, collapsed and died in a field in Auschwitz.

In April 1945, as the Americans advanced, Hilde and others were transported by train toward Munich and then marched to the Allach concentration camp. When the Americans neared, German soldiers fled while firing back, forcing the inmates to run for their lives. At liberation, May 1,1945, Hilde remembered seeing Munich up in flames. As she testified, "I don't like seeing anyone hurt, but at that moment, Munich burning was the most beautiful sight."

After the war, Hilde returned to Nagykanizsa where Erzsebet had saved the family photographs. After a year in Hungary, Hilde was smuggled past Russian soldiers into Austria with help from two aunts who had already escaped. In 1947, after a year in a displaced persons camp in Germany, she sailed to America.

Hilde settled in Chicago, where she met my father, Richard B. Simon. Imagine their wedding date, May 27, 1951, exactly 7 years after Hilde arrived at Auschwitz. This was the only available date for several reasons. My mother knew what date it was but kept it to herself and put that thought aside deciding, "that's what God wants." She later reminisced, "I figured I would make a good meaning out of it."

Hilde established a fulfilling life in Chicago, encompassing a dedication to her family and friends and active participation in synagogue activities, as well as engagement in bowling and ceramics. She shared her story in schools and was interviewed by the USC Shoah Foundation. Hilde gave birth to my sister Frances in 1953, and to me in 1957. She later welcomed two grandchildren, Rachel and Jeremy. Richard preceded her in death in 1988, and Hilde passed away on June 6, 1998, at the age of 69. As a sign of her continuing legacy, we recently marked the first birthday of Hannah Mahoney, her great-granddaughter named after her.

My mother's experiences had an important impact on my upbringing. For one, I always clear my plate at meals. A significant factor in my decision to pursue a career in oncology was the experience of assisting my mother in managing her fear and anguish. Now, I fear that global warming will bring on another type of holocaust. In my retirement, I am committed to doing my best to help fight against environmental devastation and climate change.

I also wanted to learn more about my mother's experiences. In 2013, my son and I took a journey to walk in Hilde's footsteps including visits to Austria, Hungary, and Germany where we visited Geislingen and the site of the camp and factory. Later, my wife and I dedicated stolpersteine (stumbling stones) in memory of the family in Vienna.

In conclusion, the path of friendship and historical understanding is a constructive way forward for both the survivor families and the people of Geislingen. Unfortunately, in Germany, the U.S., and elsewhere, we face a scourge of denial, intolerance, and hatred. I hope that moving forward, you remember and hear the voice of my mother, Hildegard, as she used to say, "I respect everyone's religion, everyone's belief, I always did." Throughout her life, Hilde never lost hope and saw the good in everyone. I believe that your motto "remembering-honoring-reconciling" is the legacy that my mother Hilde and all the survivors would have wanted to leave you with. This picture is in memory of my sister Frances Ungar nee Simon, who was the real family historian. Thank you for your warm welcome, the opportunity to speak today, and for sharing this momentous day of remembrance. ■

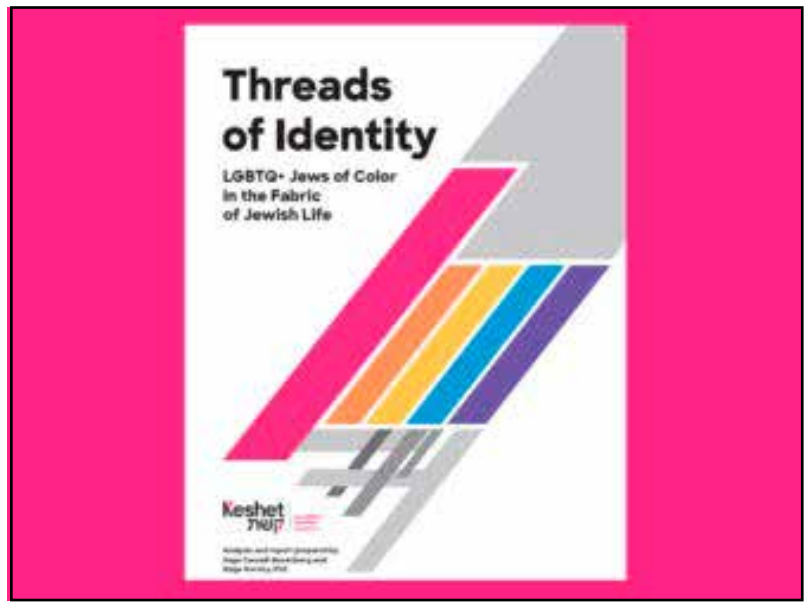
Feature

Benchmark study on LGBTQ+ Jews of Color

By Deborah Meyers Greene

"Being Jewish is accepting who a Jew is. If you can't do that, then what are you doing? We need to be cooperative and accept each other. We have to love Adonai. If you don't love your neighbors, you are not following God's commandment." — Gavri, adolescent LGBTQ+ Jewish Ann Arborite of Color.

Keshet, the leading national voice of LGBTQ+ Jews, recently released a landmark report and analysis of LGBTQ+ Jews of Color. In "Threads of Identity: LGBTQ+ Jews of Color in the Fabric of Jewish Life," more than 90 respondents from 20 states and four international locations answered questions about the types of experiences and emotions they have had while navigating Jewish communal life. Respondents were mainly Gen Z and millennials; more than 55% identified themselves as mixed or multi-racial, or white and one other race. Eighteen percent referred to themselves as "just Jewish" and 38% said they were Jews by Choice. Their gender identities include queer, cis woman, nonbinary, trans man, and gender non-conforming; and their sexualities include queer, gay, lesbian, bisexual, and pansexual.



Local LGBTQ+ Jews of Color

The report's major themes are discernible in the comments of two Ann Arbor area LGBTQ+ Jews of Color, one an adolescent, whom we will know here as Gavri, and the other, Asher Isaacs, whose kindly face is known by many, though his name may not be, at his shul and the JCC.

The first theme of Keshet's study is intersectionality, or the complex intersecting identities of LGBTQ+ Jews of Color. "In these times, being Jewish is scary. Being LGBTQ+ is even scarier," said Gavri. "As LGBTQ+ and also a person of color, it's very scary to go into Jewish spaces and see other white Jewish people because I can't find a warmth there."

Gavri's layered consciousness — their heightened self-awareness and nuanced perceptions in Jewish places — is painfully clear. "It's hard because you feel everyone's eyes are on you and only you. I walk in stone faced. Some people might give me looks but I don't care. Some white people can seem friendly on the outside and 90% of the time they're nice inside. The other 10% can be mean. They can be Jewish and do all these mean things."

"I hide. I try to be invisible," Gavri said softly, addressing compartmentalization or making parts of their identity smaller to navigate certain social and even religious settings. "I hide myself as a Jew or as an LGBTQ+ Jew of Color. I can't be outwardly LGBTQ+ but being LGBTQ+ is part of me."

Cognitive dissonance is triggered when LGBTQ+ JOC attempt to reconcile affirming versus discriminatory experiences in Jewish environments. As Gavri explained, "You can be like, 'Yay, a new synagogue!' and be excited. My white friend said that when we went to a new synagogue. But personally … I don't know what people are going to be like. You have to be prepared for the worst." Isaacs puts a button in it, saying, "I'm just tired of being a curiosity."

Not surprisingly, these experiences result in an inexorable sense of isolation. The continuous perception of "otherness" laid upon those who are both LGBTQ+ and Jewish People of Color comes through loud and clear. "I spend a lot of time feeling isolated," Isaacs said, while Gavri added: "Ever since all the new [developments at the federal level], LGBTQ+ people have been hidden and now they're invisible. It's hard to find someone to talk to. My friends are supportive, but it's very lonely … I don't see LGBTQ+ families. … I know they're out there, I know they're afraid and hiding. I just know it's hard being LGBTQ+."

Isaacs calls on the Jewish community to challenge norms and expectations about who is a Jew and what a Jew looks like. "Yes, I am Jewish. I am actually Jewish," he said, noting that people who know him in shul greet him with a pleasant Shabbat Shalom. "But new people see me and react, 'WOW, look at this!' It feels awkward, creates a spectacle. Don't look at me. Look at your siddur," he says, adding, "When you see a brown or black Jew enter Jewish spaces, don't let your fears prompt you to assume they don't belong there or they mean to harm you. You don't have to gatekeep like that."

Isaacs emphatically conveys the emotional and intellectual burden of educating his fellow Jews. "Don't assume we'll educate you. Google is free. Educate yourself," he said, adding with a smile, "I'm just trying to eat my matzah ball soup."

But ultimately, Isaacs expresses the resilience of LGBTQ+ Jews of Color, an unequivocal and unwavering commitment to their faith. "I love being a Jew more than anyone can hate me for being a Jew. I love that we have such a beautiful culture and religion that focuses on community. I love my community for all its flaws."

Solutions

The words of these two young Jews make it clear that American Jewry — and Ann Arbor Jewry, specifically — has work to do as a community and as individuals to embrace LGBTQ+ Jews of Color. In all candidness, LGBTQ+ Jewish People of Color most times are not readily recognized as Jews unless they want to be. Their unhesitating willingness to stand among us requires immense personal courage and unflinching faithfulness that compels us to respond in kind.

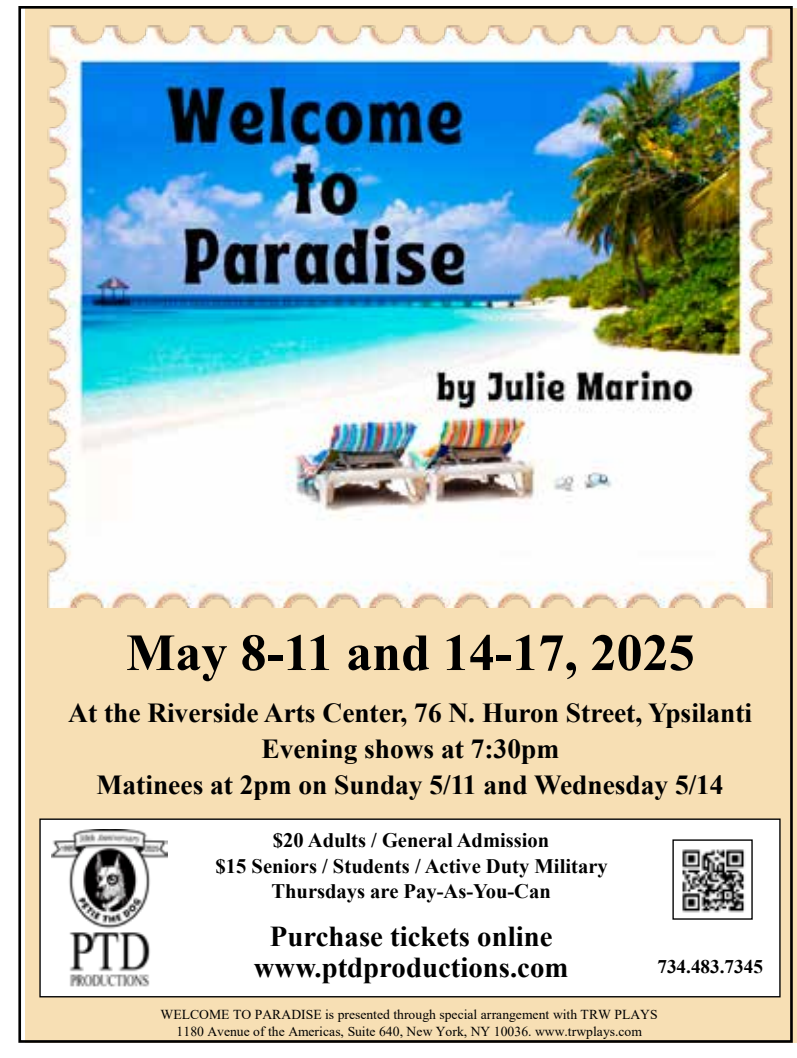
However, we know from their comments that Isaacs and Gavri are often marginalized or rebuffed, exoticized or greeted as a curiosity.

To remedy this situation, Keshet's Threads of Identity study urges other Jews to stand as allies of LGBTQ+ Jews of Color, to decenter themselves and create physical and emotional space to listen to LGBTQ+ JOC. Members of the Jewish community can ease the suffering and alienation by deepening their own awareness, managing the impulse of curiosity, and educating themselves and others. Active allies must take action, be active witnesses and, if they see something, do something.

Eighty-six percent of the Threads respondents reported that support systems and other resources for LGBTQ+ JOC are lacking in the Jewish community. Gavri has a suggestion, "Maybe you need to be that one person, be [my] friend, create a community or a program."

"Active allyship is required, not just performative," Isaacs concludes. "Any community, including the Jewish community, needs to address homophobia and transphobia. And don't be afraid to intervene if you see someone questioning a brown or Black Jew. Ask them, 'Why are you interrogating that person like that?'"

Clearly, we have work to do as a community and as individuals. However, Jews of such extraordinary faithfulness and courage as these compel us to make it so. ■



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Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor

Tzofim Friendship Caravan Concert

Please email tzofim@jccannarbor.org
for date/time and to register

FRIENDS OF ISRAEL SCOUTS, INC. TZOFIM

Sunday, July 20 @ the JCC, 2-4 PM

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Sunday, August 24 @ the JCC, 2-4 PM

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Celebration of Tu B'Av & Janmashtami

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Art, Books, Games, Food, Workshops, Music, and more!

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Art, identity, and resilience: A conversation with Iryna Bondarenko

By Idelle Hammond-Sass

Recently, I met with Iryna Bondarenko — an Ann Arbor artist, University of Michigan statistician and active member of the local Ukrainian community. I was eager to hear how the Ukrainian diaspora is faring three years into the war with Russia, how immigration policy changes are impacting daily life, and how Iryna herself has been navigating these challenges while continuing her artistic and cultural work.

With the second largest Ukrainian diaspora in the world — over 1.1 million people — the United States has a vibrant Ukrainian community, including a strong presence in Southeast Michigan. Many Ukrainians arrived under the U4U (Uniting for Ukraine) humanitarian parole status and Temporary Protected Status, initiated under President Biden, but the recent suspension of new applications and travel authorizations has created uncertainty for those still seeking refuge or hoping to make their stay permanent.

What I discovered in speaking with Iryna is a dedicated leader and artist deeply engaged in preserving her heritage, building community, and exploring the emotional toll of war through her art. Her work and activism reflect the resilience and cultural pride of a community extending its care both to newcomers and to those still in Ukraine.

Iryna was born and raised in Kyiv, a city known for its multicultural roots where Jewish and Ukrainian families often intermarried. She moved to Michigan in the 1990s, but her ties to Ukraine remain strong. In 2022 she returned to volunteer with the USA-based nonprofit organization United Help Ukraine, and has returned to Ukraine several times to her hometown Kyiv and the Lviv and Chernihiv regions.

As an artist, Iryna is known for her expressive ceramics, sculptures, and installations. She works out of Clayworks Studio on Plymouth Road, where she channels her personal and collective experiences into a compelling body of work. One such installation, exhibited at the Duderstadt Gallery, draws from the inspiration of Motanka — traditional guardian dolls. Her pieces evolved into boat-shaped tiles with inscribed sgraffito drawings and poems. Suspended from red thread, each ceramic piece becomes a symbol of protection for someone impacted by war. Beyond the studio, Iryna leads the Ann Arbor branch of the Ukrainian National Women's League of America (UNWLA), a group that has supported Ukrainian heritage and humanitarian causes since 1925. In 2024 the group organized cultural and educational events such as "The Suppression and Revival of Ukrainian Culture," featuring Ukrainian scholars on topics from music and architecture to journalism.

Partnering with the Ann Arbor District Library, they've also hosted poetry readings, including the book of poems *Details of an Hourglass* by Mykola Horbal (translated by Myroslava Stefaniuk) accompanied by the haunting sounds of the bandura, a traditional Ukrainian string instrument. In partnership with the Ann Arbor Polish Film Festival, they screened *Slovo House* at the Michigan Theater — a powerful film highlighting the cultural repression faced by Ukrainian artists and intellectuals during Stalin's rule. Over the centuries, Ukrainian language was banned or suppressed. In the 19th century the Russian Empire forbade all publishing in Ukrainian language, and in the Soviet Union Ukrainian language and traditions were suppressed and ridiculed with the aim of causing long-lasting damage to Ukrainian identity and culture.

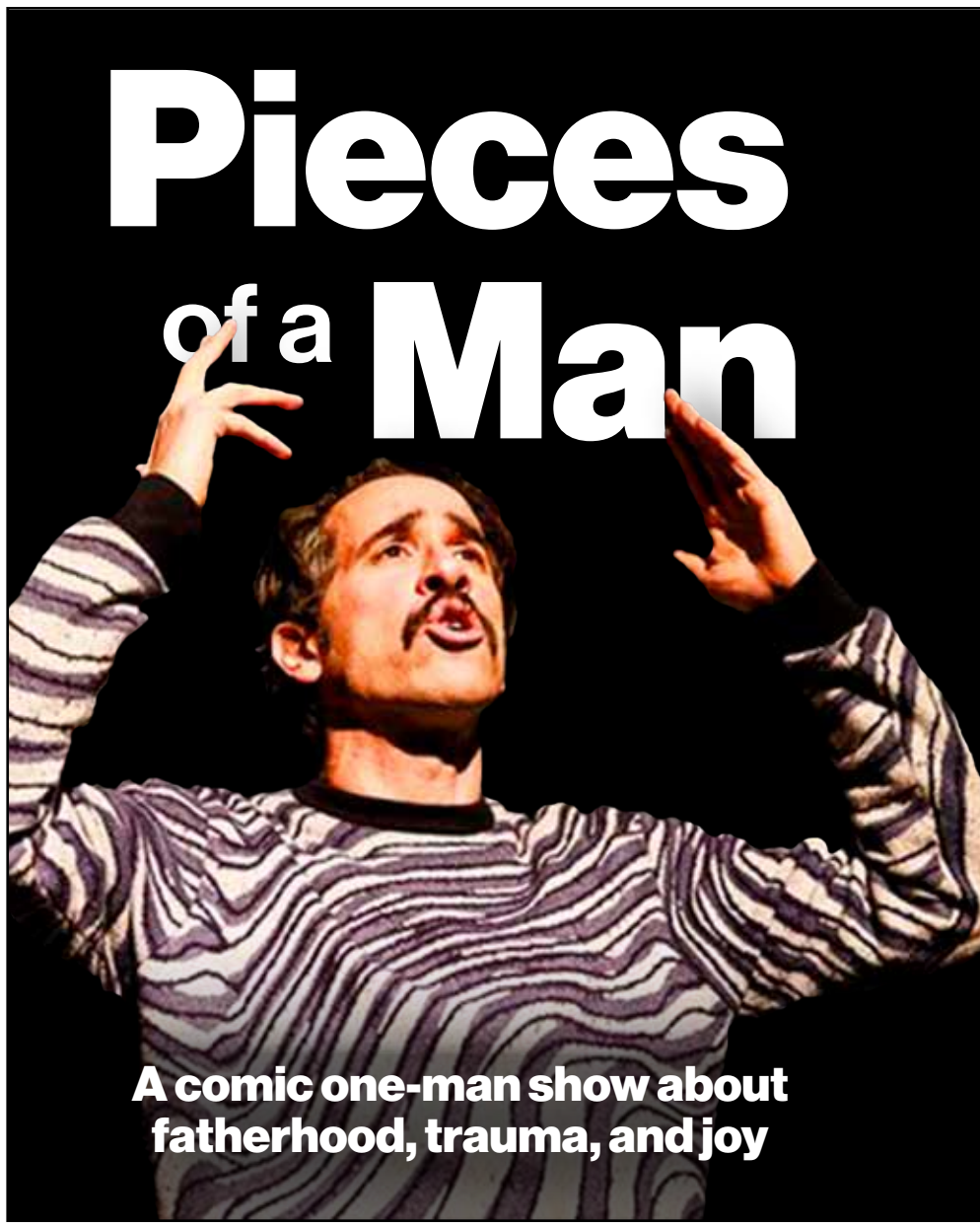
The Ann Arbor UNWLA continues its activism with events like Vyshyvanka Day — celebrated on May 15 this year at York on Packard. Named for the traditional embroidered Ukrainian shirts, the event is both a fundraiser and a vibrant celebration of Ukrainian culture, featuring music, traditional embroidered garments, crafts, and Ukrainian food. Last year's event raised over $3,000 for Frontline Medical, and this year's efforts will support the Hospitallers, volunteer paramedics who save lives on Ukraine's front lines.

While writing this article, Iryna received a grant award from UM Art Initiative to fund the exhibition of "Boat for Maksym and Other Stories from Ukraine" by Iryna Bondarenko, Katya Lisova, and Matvii Vaisberg, and to bring these Ukrainian artists to Ann Arbor. The project is co-sponsored by the U of M Center for Russian and Eastern European Studies and the Ann Arbor UNWLA branch. Additionally, in winter 2026, Mr. Vaisberg will hold a major solo exhibition in Kyiv focusing on the Holocaust.

Yet even as this community gathers in solidarity and celebration, challenges persist. The Department of Homeland Security's decision to pause new U4U applications has left many Ukrainians — and other humanitarian parolees such as Afghans — in limbo. Without the ability to apply or receive travel authorization, families remain separated, and resettlement organizations such as Jewish Family Services, Welcome Corps, Samaritas, and Afghan Evac are struggling to support those caught in policy shifts.

As we spoke, Iryna reflected on the climate of free expression for Ukrainians, both in the diaspora and at home. Even here, she noted the importance of protecting truth, identity, and language amid ongoing war and disinformation. One quiet but powerful gesture: the Ann Arbor UNWLA group distributed red cards printed in Ukrainian, offering vital information for those who may be vulnerable, displaced, or seeking help.

In Iryna's story — and her community's efforts — we see the persistence of culture and care in the face of upheaval. Through art, language, and tradition, their message is clear: Ukraine endures, and like a phoenix, will rise. Links: https://ibondceramics.com; Ann Arbor UNWLA branch https://linktr.ee/unwla_branch50; https://unwla.org (Ukrainian National Women's League of America). ■



MEMBER EXCLUSIVE
IN-PERSON PERFORMANCE

Sunday, May 18 at 2:30 PM

David Labi's critically acclaimed one-man show, *Pieces of a Man*, explores his journey to reconcile with his late father, Marcello, 20 years after his passing. A Libyan-Italian Jew and Holocaust survivor, Marcello led a life of intense highs and lows that impacted his family.

***Pieces of a Man* blends humor and emotion, offering a universal story about confronting the complex legacies of our parents with creativity and joy.**

David's dynamic performance will be followed by a Q&A and dessert reception.

This event is a thank you to our members.

To become a member and RSVP, please call 248-553-2515 by May 14.

THE Zekelman HOLOCAUST CENTER
28123 Orchard Lake Rd
Farmington Hills, MI 48334
248.553.2400
holocaustcenter.org

JFS Voices: Elina's story

By Elina Zilberberg, Chief Operations Officer Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County

At Jewish Family Services, every person who walks through our doors has a story to tell. JFS Voices is a monthly letter that brings those stories to life — through the words of the people who make our mission possible. From staff and volunteers to newcomers and longtime clients, each edition will highlight the real, personal impact of JFS's work in our community. Join us as we share moments of resilience, kindness, and transformation. These are the voices of JFS — stories of hope, dignity, and the power of human connection. Thank you for being part of our journey.

In 1979, my family came to United States from the former Soviet Union as refugees and was resettled by the Jewish Family Service of Metro Detroit. We had no family or friends here, but the Jewish community adopted us and thousands of others that escaped from the clutches of antisemitic Soviet rulers. We found refuge and our beautiful future right here in Michigan.

My grandmother who came with us became the fastest employed person in our family. She couldn't speak English, but she was a dress designer in Baku, so she could use her skillful hands to sew and fix anything with a needle and thread. A week after arrival, some nice store owner brought clothing to our apartment, and thus Lily began her career in the U.S. My parents, an engineer and a doctor, began their difficult quest to continue practicing their professions in Michigan. Both went on to have fulfilling, successful careers in their fields. They were always so grateful to be able to contribute to our adopted home, and to pay back to the country that accepted us with open arms and gave them and their kids an opportunity to openly practice Judaism and to participate in communal Jewish life. Throughout their lives my parents continued to donate their time and money to a variety of charities, locally in the Jewish community and the Detroit-based arts and cultural institutions as well as to HIAS, Israel nonprofits, and Holocaust museums in D.C., Farmington Hills, and Yad Vashem. My parents provided us — my brother and I — with a blueprint for righteous living: to always contribute to your community in any way you can. Give tzedakah anonymously, welcome the stranger, repair the world with one good deed at a time, help your neighbors, respect and care for the elders, educate yourselves and your children.

My brother and I went on to become educated locally. I chose to attend Bais Yakov school for girls. I fondly remember my teachers, rabbis, and the girls that I studied and graduated with. My brother and I both have meaningful careers, amazing families, and kids and grandkids!

I graduated with a business degree from Wayne State, but little did I know at that time that I would spend the rest of my professional career working for a Jewish nonprofit. My career at JFS in Detroit began many decades ago, when I answered a need for bilingual resettlement case managers. It was meant to be. I was giving back to the agency and community that resettled my own family.

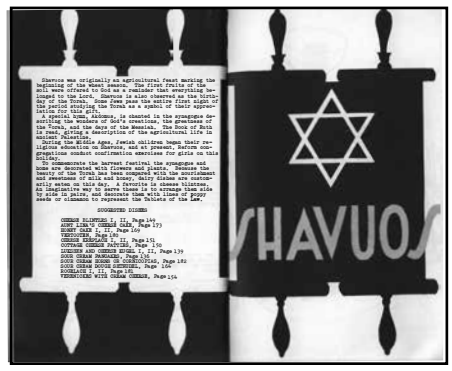
Fast-forward just 7 years: in 1997 I met a brilliant young CEO of Jewish Family Services of Washtenaw County, Anya Abramzon, who convinced me to drive to Ann Arbor to establish and run the Employment Services at the tiny agency. The rest is history … I will be celebrating my 28 years at JFSWC this year. I cannot imagine my life without my JFS family in it. I wouldn't change a single life decision that brought me to this point, I have been blessed to find my professional meaning of life. This work has brought me such joy and fulfillment in the work this agency does. The staff, board members, volunteers, our clients, and our community have helped me, a refugee kid, realize my parents' hope and dreams for their children.

I am forever grateful to this country, my family, Anya, JFS Family, and our community for giving me this opportunity to make a difference in someone else's life every day. I am very lucky! ■

Kosher Cuisine

Argentina, Shavuot, Spring!

By Lonnie Sussman



Do you like to travel? I don't mean business trips, but the fun trips we take for culture, history, nature, adventure, relaxation, and visits with friends and family. For the past dozen years or so I've travelled with a group of women to places I never thought I'd go. The trips are full of great conversations, singing, and all the other things I mentioned above.

This year's big trip was to Argentina and involved 10 flights, including flying to Argentina and back, in two weeks! It's a huge country and the flights allowed us to experience its beauty and diversity. We met lovely people who were gracious and excited to share their love and pride in their country. Two of those lovely people were Maria and Augustine, who own several properties in the northern area of Patagonia near the city of Puerto Madryn on the Atlantic coast.

Maria made us meals three times a day and was able to provide vegetarian foods for our needs. I kept asking for recipes as everything was delicious. She sent me the list of menus in Spanish. Additional information also came in Spanish. It was mainly healthy and simple meals with lots of vegetables, grains, and beans. Most of the soups were made with onions, carrots, and other vegetables, and then blended to make them creamy. Add lentils or beans and enjoy. Her salads always included herbs and various seeds along with a mix of lettuces or other greens. What made her cooking even more amazing was the fact that the nearest stores and supplies were in Puerto Madryn, a two-hour drive away. Oh, and she made her own bread!

We went to this area to see the wildlife: guanacos, a native animal that looks a bit like a small camel; rheas, they look like a Roadrunner cartoon; orcas; and sea lions evading the orcas. Elephant seals molting their 3–4 ton bodies' skin, and thousands and thousands of Magellanic penguins, on this coast to breed. If you do have the opportunity to go to Argentina, spend a few days in this region.

Basque Cheesecake

From Butternutbakeryblog.com

Serves 8–10

This recipe showed up in my email feed and I will make it for Shavuot, the traditional dairy Jewish holiday. Maria and Augustine, our hosts, are a fifth generation family descended from Basque ancestors who came to this area of Argentina more than a hundred years ago. Maria did not make this cheesecake, but she did make an amazing, delicious flan very similar to this. I will make it for Shavuot and think of both the giving of the Torah and the honor of seeing the beauty of this land and its inhabitants.

Unsalted butter to coat the pan
2 lbs cream cheese, at room temperature (use the full fat)
1½ cups sugar
5 large eggs, room temperature
1 tsp vanilla extract
1¾ cups heavy cream
1 tsp salt
¼ cup all-purpose flour

Preheat the oven to 400 degrees and butter the inside of a 9-inch springform pan. Press 2 layers of parchment paper into the bottom and up the sides. They should stick about 2 inches above the edge of the pan. Use a hand or standing mixer to cream together the cream cheese and the sugar on a low to medium speed. If you have a paddle attachment, use it. Mix in the eggs, one at a time, on a low speed, then add the vanilla. Pour the heavy cream in on a slow and steady stream while on low speed. When the mixture is smooth, add in the flour and salt and fold to combine all the ingredients. Pour into the pan and bake for 60–65 minutes or until the top is completely burnt and has a slight jiggle to it. Let cool to room temperature for about an hour and then remove from pan and slice. You can also leave it in the pan and leave the cheesecake in the refrigerator for a couple of hours to completely set.

Yotam Ottolenghi's Muhammara Recipe

From a video I saw on the plane ride to Argentina

I'm not sure if the recipe is on a blog or in one of his many cookbooks. After watching the video, I looked up Muhammara on the web. There are lots of entries, but they are all similar. It's amazing as a dip along with pita and chummus, but I also like it on roasted vegetables or even on an omelet.

5 red bell peppers, cored, seeded, and quartered
1 white onion, roughly chopped
2 plum tomatoes, halved lengthwise, stems removed (I didn't have any so I used the cherry tomatoes I did have)
1 red chili, stem removed (optional)
5 tbs olive oil, divided
Salt and pepper
1½ tbs tomato sauce
2 tsp cumin seeds (I used cumin powder because that's what I have)
2 tsp coriander seed (I used the powder)
8 garlic cloves, peeled (I think I used 4)
2 tbs pomegranate molasses, divided
About ⅓–½ cup walnuts, toasted and roughly chopped
⅓–½ cup pomegranate seeds

Preheat oven to 425 degrees and add the peppers, onion, tomatoes, and chili to a parchment-lined baking sheet. Toss with 3 tbs of the olive oil, ½ tsp salt, and plenty of black pepper. Roast for about 20 minutes and then mix in the garlic cloves. Roast for another 20 minutes until vegetables are softened and lightly charred. Remove from oven and allow to cool enough to remove the skins of the peppers and tomatoes as best as you can. Some may stick. While the vegetables are in the oven, place the tomato paste in a small pan and heat it up until the color darkens, then add in the spices until the mixture smells good. Add this mixture to the vegetables and a ½ tsp salt and tablespoon of the pomegranate molasses and use a food processor to pulse into a coarse paste. Leave the mixture a little chunky. Add the walnuts and pulse for just a little bit. You want to be able to keep the mixture thick, not smooth. Place in a serving bowl and use extra pomegranate seeds to decorate the top if you have them.

Venetian Pumpkin Risotto

The Jewish Kitchen by Clarissa Hyman

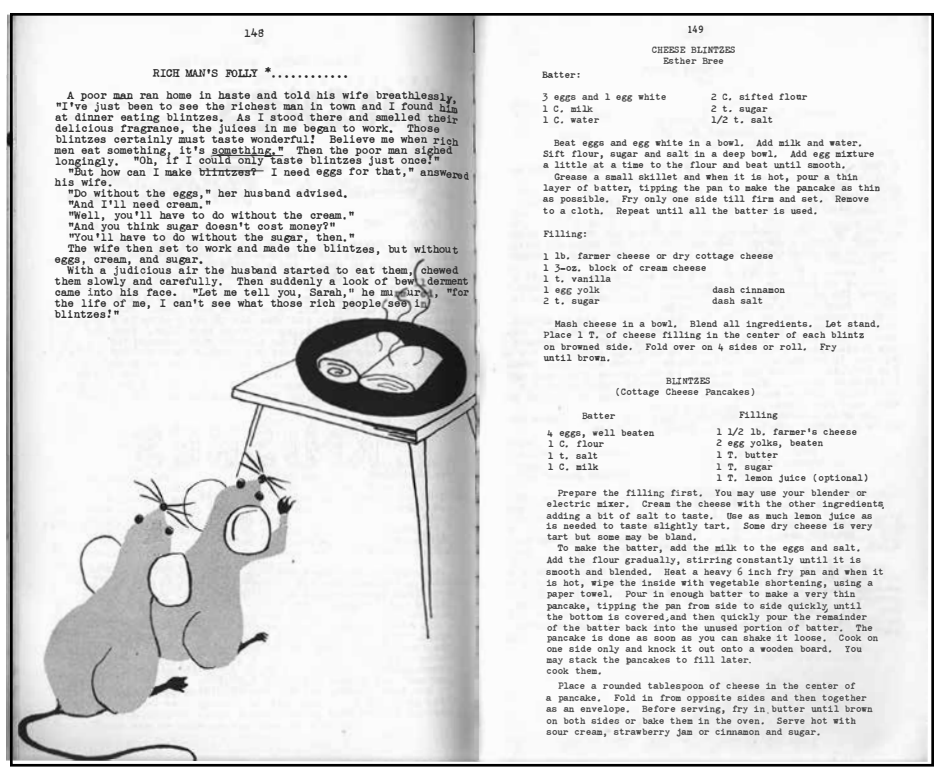
Serves 4

This would be another good dish for Shavuot, but I've included it for a different reason. The last few days of my trip to Argentina were spent in Mendoza, the region known for Malbec wine as well as other wines. At one winery we had a wine tasting with lunch. Each course was paired with a particular Malbec. Each course was a teeny tiny, delicious dish the size of a teeny tiny teacup. The food was beautiful to look at and extraordinary to taste with the wines. There was a course of meat, but since I don't eat that, I was served a pasta dish. In general, I don't like pasta (I know, crazy), but this dish was beautiful. It looked like a flower covered in golden sauce. It was one of the most delicious meals I've ever had. I asked my companions to try the dish and they agreed. This dish is not the one I had in Mendoza, but it reminds me of how good squash or pumpkin is. I recently made this dish for a Shabbat dinner but used asparagus instead of the butternut squash.

2 tbs olive oil
4 sage leaves, finely chopped (plus extra for garnish, optional)
1 large garlic clove finely chopped.
1 lb butternut squash or a pumpkin of your choice. Peel the skin and chop into cubes
Salt and pepper to taste
3½ cups risotto style rice. This recipe calls for Vialone Nano (this is the traditional Venetian rice but you could use Arborio).
½ cup white wine
1 quart hot vegetable stock
4 tbs grated Parmesan cheese

Heat the oil and gently sauté the sage and garlic. When the aroma rises, add in the squash or pumpkin cubes. Add a little salt and pepper and sauté for a few more minutes. Sprinkle in the rice and stir for a few more minutes. Add the white wine and cook for another few minutes until it evaporates. Now pour the stock in and stir it around and then bring to a boil.

Cover and simmer until the squash is soft and the rice is cooked, about 20–30 minutes. The risotto should be very moist. Add the parmesan cheese just before serving. Top each serving with another sage leaf if you like.



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RICH MAN'S FOLLY *.....

A poor man ran home in haste and told his wife breathlessly, "I've just been to see the richest man in town and I found him at dinner eating blintzes. As I stood there and smelled their delicious fragrance, the juices in me began to work. Those blintzes certainly must taste wonderful! Believe me when rich men eat something, it's something." Then the poor man sighed longingly. "Oh, if I could only taste blintzes just once!"

"But how can I make blintzes? I need eggs for that," answered his wife.

"Do without the eggs," her husband advised.

"And I'll need cream."

"Well, you'll have to do without the cream."

"And you think sugar doesn't cost money?"

"You'll have to do without the sugar, then."

The wife then set to work and made the blintzes, but without eggs, cream, and sugar.

With a judicious air the husband started to eat them, chewed them slowly and carefully. Then suddenly a look of bewilderment came into his face. "Let me tell you, Sarah," he murmured, "for the life of me, I can't see what those rich people see in blintzes!"

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CHEESE BLINTZES
Esther Bree

Batter:

3 eggs and 1 egg white	2 C. sifted flour
1 C. milk	2 t. sugar
1 C. water	1/2 t. salt

Beat eggs and egg white in a bowl. Add milk and water. Sift flour, sugar and salt in a deep bowl. Add egg mixture a little at a time to the flour and beat until smooth.

Grease a small skillet and when it is hot, pour a thin layer of batter, tipping the pan to make the pancake as thin as possible. Fry only one side till firm and set. Remove to a cloth. Repeat until all the batter is used.

Filling:

1 lb. farmer cheese or dry cottage cheese	
1 3-oz. block of cream cheese	
1 t. vanilla	
1 egg yolk	dash cinnamon
2 t. sugar	dash salt

Mash cheese in a bowl. Blend all ingredients. Let stand. Place 1 T. of cheese filling in the center of each blintz on browned side. Fold over on 4 sides or roll. Fry until brown.

BLINTZES
(Cottage Cheese Pancakes)

Batter	Filling
4 eggs, well beaten	1 1/2 lb. farmer's cheese
1 C. flour	2 egg yolks, beaten
1 t. salt	1 T. butter
1 C. milk	1 T. sugar
	1 T. lemon juice (optional)

Prepare the filling first. You may use your blender or electric mixer. Cream the cheese with the other ingredients, adding a bit of salt to taste. Use as much lemon juice as is needed to taste slightly tart. Some dry cheese is very tart but some may be bland.

To make the batter, add the milk to the eggs and salt. Add the flour gradually, stirring constantly until it is smooth and blended. Heat a heavy 6 inch fry pan and when it is hot, wipe the inside with vegetable shortening, using a paper towel. Pour in enough batter to make a very thin pancake, tipping the pan from side to side quickly until the bottom is covered,and then quickly pour the remainder of the batter back into the unused portion of batter. The pancake is done as soon as you can shake it loose. Cook on one side only and knock it out onto a wooden board. You may stack the pancakes to fill later.
cook them.

Place a rounded tablespoon of cheese in the center of a pancake. Fold in from opposite sides and then together as an envelope. Before serving, fry in butter until brown on both sides or bake them in the oven. Serve hot with sour cream, strawberry jam or cinnamon and sugar.

Spring Wild Edible

There are lots of wild edibles that grow in Michigan from early spring until fall. Please make sure you properly identify the plants. Maybe you are asking "why?" It's fun to take a walk outside and look for the plants. They are super healthy as most of them have a lot of vitamins, especially vitamin A and C. Try one or more of these wild edibles and enjoy the gifts of Mother Nature like our ancestors did in the past and some of us continue to do.

A few years ago, I wrote about dandelion fritters that I like to make as a sign of spring. Remember to pick the flowers from a lawn you know wasn't sprayed with weed killers. Mix the flowers with an egg and breadcrumbs or flour and sauté until browned. Take a book out of the library or do some research online about how to identify wild garlic or leeks and make vichyssoise. If you find nettles growing near your garden or on your walks, wear gloves, use scissors, trim the tops — yep, the nettle part of the plant — and wash them well. The nettles lose the stinging property when cooked. Use them as you would any green like spinach. Fry up some chopped onions, garlic, and potatoes and add the nettles with some butter and a sprinkling of nutmeg and salt and pepper. You can also blend it into a soup. I once made a casserole with the nettles instead of spinach. One more fun spring wild food is sorrel. If you can't find it outdoors, you can probably find it at the farmers market. Try it in a salad with chopped mixed fresh herbs and lettuce. ■

Restaurant Review

Ayse's Turkish Café and an "Intangible Cultural Heritage"

By Candace Bulkley and Trina Fuller

Candace and Trina became friends in the Temple Beth Emeth adult b-mitzvah class that graduated in 2022. They will be honing their palates, visiting, and writing about a variety of independent, locally owned Washtenaw County restaurants, catering to a variety of dietary preferences.

One of the pleasures of writing this column each month is seeking out local, independently owned restaurants and shining a light on their specialties. It had been years since we had last visited Ayse's Cafe. Tucked in the back of the Courtyard Shops on Plymouth Road you will find this gem waiting to be rediscovered. This independent, woman-owned restaurant has been open since 1993. If you're not familiar with Turkish food, you will be by the time you leave. Not exactly Mediterranean or European,

it's somewhere in between.

Glad to come inside to get out of the cold, we were warmly greeted like guests into a home by Ayse herself when we visited on a March evening. We noticed all guests were greeted in the same way as Ayse went in and out of the kitchen, having conversations, laughing, asking how you liked the food or answering questions. It was lovely to see and experience. While we perused the menu, we enjoyed a bottle of Turkish Efes Pilsener and a cup of Turkish hot tea.

The menu at Ayse's rotates daily. In-season vegetables from the farmer's market serve as inspiration for some of the dishes. Our server was friendly and good spirited while answering questions and offering recommendations. Like many Mediterranean restaurants the small starter plates here are called Mezes. Our choice was a simple chickpea salad studded with chopped carrots and bell peppers adorned by a punchy herb vinaigrette. A simple, yet delicious, way to begin. We had inquired about the humus, wondering how the Turkish version differed from the Middle Eastern version we are all familiar with, but ended up not ordering it. Graciously, the folks in the kitchen sent an order for us to try along with some whole wheat pita. As it turns out this version was more rustic and less seasoned than the super smooth tahini, lemon, and garlic versions widely available, but tasty nonetheless. Our trusty server recommended we try a spinach and feta Borek. It seems like every cuisine has some version of filling wrapped in phyllo dough, but we thoroughly enjoyed this Turkish version which had a touch of peppery heat and an ample amount of feta and spinach filling between the crispy phyllo layers.

Entrées at Ayse's include a choice between two soups or a house salad. Despite the chilly weather, one of us started with and loved the Cacik — a cold cucumber and yogurt soup. The combination is simply delicious any time of year. The other picked Ayse's classic vegan red lentil soup. It was warm, richly seasoned, and comforting. On the night of our visit, the entrée menu featured a tempting selection of traditional Turkish lamb, salmon, chicken, beef, and vegetarian dishes. Most entrées come with a side of grain such as rice or bulgur; we asked for a small portion of both, which was no problem to accommodate.

Our first entrée was Ali Nazik, which, with a bit of recipe sleuthing, we learned is a traditional home style dish from the Gaziantep province, in the Southeastern Anatolia region of Turkey. Ayse's interpretation was fantastic with its seasoned ground lamb served on top of an addicting smoked and spiced eggplant puree. Partnered with the rice and hearty bulgur pilav it was just the dish the cold day called for. Our second entrée was Keskek, a traditional Turkish ceremonial dish traditionally prepared for wedding ceremonies, circumcisions, and religious holidays. The menu describes Keskek as "a hearty wheat berry porridge served with butter and mint sauce," also a dish made for a cold day. Unlike the Ali Nazik, this was a gentle dish. Think a hug from grandma, think savory oatmeal. Finely shredded chicken is mixed with toothsome wheat berries and elevated by a drizzle of butter and mint sauce. Ayse explained that rather than using fresh mint, dried mint is used in this butter sauce, which has a more concentrated and pronounced flavor. The Keskek was so simple and yet it tasted sophisticated, luxurious, and was completely unexpected. Keskek and the traditional communal method in which it is prepared has been recognized by UNESCO as a piece of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Wow! Time and again we have seen the humblest of ingredients transformed into sums much greater than their parts.

We finished our meal with a serving of Noah's pudding and it contained dried fruit, barley, rice, and nuts with just enough sweetness to call it dessert. We also tried the Cezerye — a carrot and walnut square topped with coconut which was also not overly sweet and was very satisfying. Both of the desserts and the dinner selections we tried were prepared from clean tasting, healthy ingredients. The portions are European style — just enough for one meal. There is no online ordering here, and the daily menu is updated by a photo of the whiteboard. Carry out is available; however, you have to pick up the phone.

For 32 years Ayse's has been quietly serving the Ann Arbor community delicious and wholesome foods from her homeland. The beauty of owning your own restaurant is having the flexibility to do things your way, pivoting each day to change the menu to reflect the season or the weather forecast. No chain restaurant could ever dream of functioning this way. Visit her charming restaurant and keep your dining dollars in our community.

Ayse's Cafe 1703 Plymouth Rd., Ann Arbor 734-662-1711
://www.aysesturkishcafeannarbor.com/
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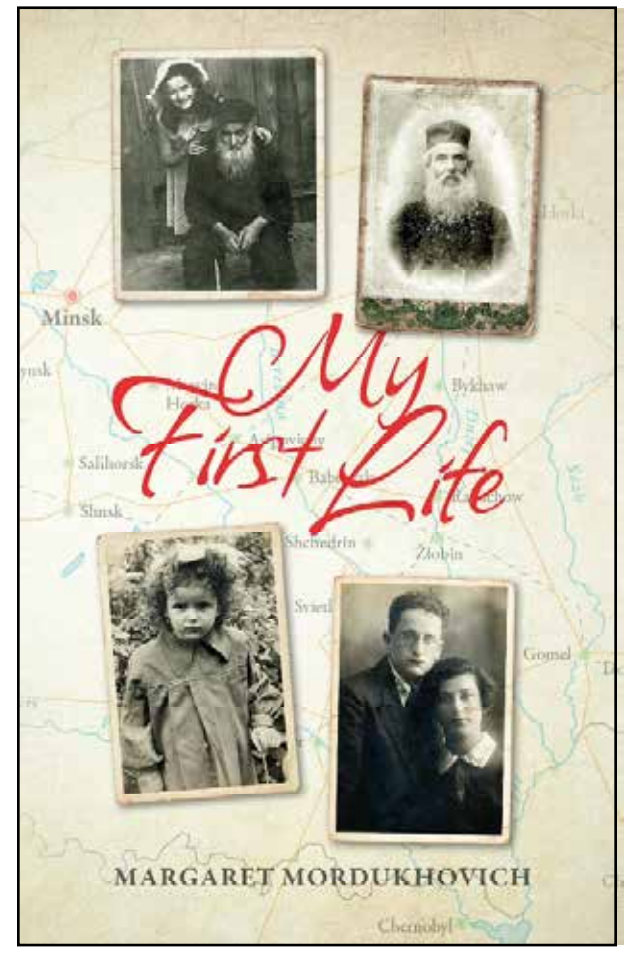
Book Review

From Russia to Ann Arbor: A Soviet Jewish memoir

My First Life, reviewed by Beth Dwoskin



My First Life is an autobiography by Margaret Mordukhovich, a Beth Israel member who's made Ann Arbor her home since 1989. Her book paints the bleak picture of life for Jews in post-war Russia and presents the background for the migration of Soviet Jews to America in the late 1980s. The author provides a wealth of detail about her extended family as a way of conveying the unbelievable and unrelenting difficulties Jews faced in Russia, from the time of the Revolution when her grandparents were young adults to the time when Margaret and her family left for good. Her father served in the Russian army in World War II and her mother escaped with her brother to Stalingrad, an eastern city that the Germans failed to conquer.

Hunger was a constant theme of Margaret's life. Her mother watched her until she swallowed every mouthful of food. As an adult, she prepared preserves and canned food from foraged produce and stood in long lines after a day's work to buy whatever food was available. Margaret and her husband Boris were stellar achievers in the rigorous Soviet system of education, but because they were Jewish, they had to jump through hoops to get the recognition and job offers they earned.

In addition to writing about herself and her family, Margaret recalls many friends and enemies along the way, in school and work and in the living spaces where the family crowded in with their neighbors and gave up their privacy to shared kitchens and bathrooms. One of the most poignant is her recollection of a non-Jewish neighbor who lived in Polish Belarus and who emigrated to Argentina in 1939 to escape the German invasion. In Argentina, he listened to Soviet propaganda on the radio and was eager to return. He returned to Russia in 1955 and saw immediately what a mistake that was. Because his mail was censored, he wrote back to his friends in Buenos Aires, encouraging them to move to Russia and directing them to an address where they should go to prepare for the move — the address of a funeral parlor.

Margaret writes in a simple, chatty style with many asides, and she does a great job of portraying the personalities of her family and friends as her narrative moves to the 1970s, when Soviet antisemitism became even worse and Jews made more and more attempts to leave. She takes the reader through every step on the journey, starting from the time that Margaret and Boris realized that their daughter Lena's teacher was a rabid antisemite. They decided to immigrate in 1979, but there were nine years of obstacles before they were finally able to leave in 1988. Margaret describes vividly the experience of arriving in Vienna, a western city bursting with expensive consumer goods. The family was supported by the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society through their whole immigration process, but they still suffered hardships as they waited in Italy for their formal invitation from the American government.

This book will be a shock for American Jewish readers who know about the Holocaust in western and central Europe but who have heard little about the experience of Russian Jews who survived the war and lived another half century under Soviet oppression. Margaret doesn't spare the grim details, but she stays upbeat and humorous and she ends on a grateful, positive, and contented note. The Soviet Jewish story is not familiar to most American Jews, and we are fortunate to have this excellent, firsthand version to teach us. ■

Climate action tip from AARC: Use real dishes and silverware!

By Rena Basch, AARC Board Secretary

"It's crazy that our society has reached a point where the effort necessary to extract oil from the ground, ship it to a refinery, turn it into plastic, shape it appropriately, wrap and box it up, truck it to a store, buy it, and bring it home, is considered to be less effort than what it takes to just wash a spoon when you're done with it." - Unknown snarky yet wise person.

Since the mid-1990s, the Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC) has used real dishes and silverware and washable tablecloths for every Kabbalat Shabbat potluck dinner and nearly all special events as well. The first set of plates and bowls wan donated by the mother of one of AARC's founders, and in the years since, people have populated the dish cart with everything needed to eat and serve meals without the use of disposables.

Many studies have been done and much has already been written about the environmental impacts of disposables/single use plastic silverware and paper plates. These things contribute to deforestation, pollution, landfill waste, and water waste in their processing. In addition, single-use plastic utensils and Styrofoam plates and cups that are ubiquitous in American dining habits are now recognized as a large contributor to climate change.

Washing dishes after Kabbalat Shabbat potluck dinner

Consider some of the ways that plastics used for disposable utensils contribute to climate change: extraction of fossil fuels generates greenhouse gas emissions, and the processing/production of plastic silverware requires vast amounts of energy. Then the plastic spoons are packaged in more plastic, and shipped to warehouses, and then trucked all around the country to stock stores and restaurants.

Consider that even paper plates, cups and "compostable" single-use dishes and cutlery have some of the same climate impacts because manufacturing and transportation have a such a high carbon footprint.

An easy way to reduce carbon emissions is to move your family and your organizations away from using disposables for meals. Isn't it more special to eat from a real plate with a real fork? Flimsy plastic knives can't even cut a bagel, right? Volunteers washing the dishes together after dinner builds community, and can be fun too. Long-time AARC members remember times when musical members would even bring their guitars into the kitchen to serenade and sing with the cleanup crew. Those are the kind of emissions that benefit the earth and her inhabitants! ■

What is life asking of us?

By Rabbi Aura Ahuvia

Martin Buber was deep into his prayer practice one morning when there came a knock on the door. An acquaintance. They chatted briefly but Buber, annoyed with the distraction, was eager to return to his prayers. Weeks later, Buber learned that the young man had died, though whether by suicide or war is unclear. A mutual friend revealed that the young man had actually come not for a chat, but for important life advice, which filled Buber with self-recrimination for failing to perceive the man's underlying need.

Rabbi Aura Ahuvia

Buber was shaken. Until that moment, he had glorified the totalizing experience of prayer immersion, regarding conversation as secondary. But this young man's death made him realize that each moment of life makes its claim upon us, and our duty is to respond fully. That, he concluded, is the essence of religion. Engage with life as you find it; don't seclude yourself to pursue heaven.

As he thought through the implications of this sacralizing I-Thou relationship, Buber realized it extended to nature. "[I can] become bound … [even to a tree, and …] the relationship is mutual." As Buber discovered, it is up to us to figure out what life needs of us, and to respond fully. We encounter life in many forms, he concluded, sometimes through people and sometimes through the environment.

Today, our living environment, and the air, water, and earth that sustain it, is calling us. How should we respond?

Activism is critical, as is drawing nourishment from the wonder and love we find in nature. Walk outdoors. Take in the sounds. Smells. Touch the bark of a tree. Taste fresh blackberries as they ripen in the fields. Appreciate the blue sky framing the canopy, the delicate buds, the blossoms shivering in the dew.

Viktor Frankl, who wrote *Man's Search for Meaning,* met a woman in Auschwitz just before she died. Standing by a window together, she'd said, "This tree is my only friend." Frankl saw the branch of a chestnut tree. It bore two blossoms. "I often talk to this tree," she said. Does it reply, he wondered? "Yes," she said, "it says to me, 'I am here — I am here — I am life, eternal life.'"

Our duty is to hear and respond to our environment's needs with our full attention, presence, and care. May we behold our natural world as a sacred trust, and respond accordingly.

Rabbi Aura Ahuvia leads Friday night services monthly at Beth Israel Congregation, often co-leads Saturday morning services at Pardes Hannah, and officiates life cycle events for unaffiliated Jews. She is also the Psychedelic Rabbi, providing preparation and integration coaching. You can reach her at PsychedelicRabbi@gmail.com, or check out her website, www.PsychedelicRabbi.com. ■

Third Annual A2 Climate Teach-In

By Donald Levitt

A significant majority of adults in the U.S. is worried about climate change. Most people would like to take climate action, but they do not know where to start.

The Third Annual A2 Climate Teach-In, scheduled for Sunday, May 4, at the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, is specifically designed to help people "find their niche" and feel prepared to take climate action.

Beth Israel Congregation and Temple Beth Emeth are co-sponsors of the Teach-In this year and have been supporters of the Teach-In since it started in 2023. The first two Teach-Ins were hosted at Genesis of Ann Arbor (the facility co-owned by Temple Beth Emeth and St. Clare's Episcopal Church). Mayor Christopher Taylor was the keynote speaker for the first Teach-Iin, and Congresswoman Debbie Dingell was the keynote speaker for the second Teach-In.

Congresswoman Debbie Dingell at the Second A2 Climate Teach-In (photo by DeVeaux Gauger)

The theme for this year's Teach-In is "From Climate Distress to Climate Action." For those concerned about climate change, recent actions from the federal government have been alarming, but climate activists understand that local climate actions can be very impactful.

This year's Teach-In will open with inspiring stories of climate action at the city, county, and state levels.

Breakout sessions will focus on finding your "niche" in climate action; steps to creating a more sustainable home; climate actions taken by local congregations; and local approaches to climate justice.

A very special breakout session, entitled "Our Trash Tells a Story," will be hosted by the Ann Arbor Public Schools' Freeman Environmental Youth Council. This session invites middle and high school students to join in a "gloves on" examination of household trash, and learn a process for minimizing the climate impacts of trash.

The Third Annual A2 Climate Teach-In will be held on Sunday, May 4, 1:30–5:15 p.m. at the First Unitarian Universalist Congregation of Ann Arbor, 4001 Ann Arbor-Saline Rd., Ann Arbor. Pre-registration is required. More information about this free event, and a link for registration, can be found at A2ClimateTeachin.com. ■

TBE Events in May

Events and services are both in person and/or virtual. Please see www.templebethemeth.org for full details, location information, and links.

Tot Shabbat Service & Dinner
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
Join the Clergy to celebrate Shabbat with fun activities, stories, songs, and age-appropriate learning for children ages 0–5. Registration requested

Elementary Shabbat Service & Dinner (every second Friday of the month)
Fridays at 5:45 p.m.
A short service, song session, and community building! Most appropriate for children ages 5–10 and their parents, grandparents, and other adults. Everyone is welcome! Registration requested

Wine & Cheese Shabbat Reception
Fridays at 6 p.m. (except for the second Friday of each month)

Shabbat Service
Fridays at 6:30 p.m.
Every 2nd Friday at 7:30 p.m.

Saturday Shabbat service
Saturdays at 10 a.m.

Weekday morning blessings
Weekdays at 9:15 a.m.
Join TBE lay leaders each weekday morning for a short service of song, poetry, and meditation.

Twenty-five-minute mindfulness with Jewish spiritual director Linda Greene
Tuesdays at 8:30 a.m.
Zoom room opens at 8:15 a.m. for optional check-in. Blessing and intention setting 8:30–8:35 a.m. Meditate 8:35–9 a.m. Start your day centered and connected.

Queer Torah Study
Tuesdays at 7 p.m.
Join us in person or via Zoom for a discussion of queer themes in the weekly Torah portion! Led by Ari Marcotte & Ari Smith. Guest leaders welcome! Contact Ari M (ari.j.marcotte@gmail.com) for more information.

Back Door Food Pantry
Thursdays, 4 to 7 p.m.

Meditation with Claire Weiner
Thursdays at 5 p.m.
Join Claire Weiner for a 40-minute meditation session.

Lunch & Learn with Rabbi Whinston
Fridays at 12 p.m.
Shabbat morning Torah study
Saturdays at 8:50 a.m.
Join us for this weekly discussion of the Torah portion.

Weekly Mahj
Tuesdays at 7:30 p.m.
Wednesdays at 12:30 p.m.

WTBE Gift Shop Open
Friday at 5:30 p.m. Second Friday of every month open at 6:30 p.m.
Washtenaw County's only Judaica Shop!

Jewish Book Club
Thursdays, May 1, 8, 15, 22, 29, at 11 a.m.

Women's Rosh Chodesh Circle
Saturday, May 3, at 4:30 p.m.

A Taste of Talmud
Mondays, May 5 and 19, at 12 p.m. and 7:30 p.m.

Torah Trope Crash Course
Mondays, May 5 and 12, at 3 p.m.

Coping with Chronic Illness and Pains
Tuesday, May 6, at 4 p.m.

Brotherhood Guys Night Out
Thursday, May 8, at 6 p.m.

Family Camp
Friday, May 9, at 6:45 p.m.
Family Camp provides an opportunity for families to play and learn together, for students to reinforce and share some of what they are learning in the classroom, and most importantly, to strengthen ties among students and parents/caretakers.

WTBE Fiber Arts
Mondays, May 12 and 26, at 7:30 p.m.

WTBE Historical Novel Reading Group
Wednesday, May 14, at 1 p.m.

LGBTQ Shabbat Potluck
Friday, May 16, at 5:30 p.m.

Community Health and Wellness Fair
Sunday, May 18, at 3 p.m.

Bereavement Group
Tuesday, May 20, at 4 p.m.
The group will have opportunities to share openly about their process of grieving and will also have topic-based readings to spark discussion.

Women's Rosh Chodesh Circle
Saturday, May 24, at 4:30 p.m. ■

Community Health and Wellness Fair at Temple Beth Emeth

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE) is excited to host a Community Health and Wellness Fair, with information relevant to all ages and stages of life, including seniors. This event will be dynamic and varied, and participants can enjoy a keynote address and breakout sessions, as well as a vendor hall featuring Jewish nonprofits and other relevant organizations. The fair will be held at TBE on Sunday, May 18, from 3 to 6 p.m., and it is open not only to temple members, but to the entire Washtenaw Jewish community.

Dr. Linda Selwa, a renowned neurologist, will deliver the keynote address. She will present on maintaining cognitive health across the lifespan, and then she will welcome questions from the audience. Dr. Selwa serves the department of neurology as the Associate Chair for Clinical Services, co-director of the epilepsy program, and director of the Clinical Neurophysiology Fellowship Program at the University of Michigan.

Following the keynote, participants can select two of four breakout sessions to attend, led by other local experts in various aspects of health and wellness. Murray Rosenthal, a clinical chemist who worked on the team that invented the first commercial Hemoglobin A1c test, will present health tips based in his chemistry background that can improve both quality and length of life. Lori Shepard, a professional chef of over 20 years and certified nutrition and fitness coach, will speak about how to eat nutritious foods to fuel your body. Dr. Will Aibinder, an orthopedic surgeon at the University of Michigan specializing in shoulder and elbow surgery, will present useful information to patients preparing for orthopedic and other major operations. There will also be a session led by Life & Legacy, an important philanthropic approach to estate planning with which the greater Ann Arbor Jewish community is proud to partner.

The schedule for this event will be as follows:

3 p.m.: Vendor Hall Opens
3:30–4:15 p.m.: Keynote Address by Dr. Selwa and Q&A
4:15–4:30 p.m.: Break
4:30–5 p.m.: Breakout Session 1
5–5:30 p.m.: Break
5:30–6 p.m.: Breakout Session 2

The Community Health and Wellness Fair is possible thanks to a partnership between TBE clergy Cantor Emerita Annie Rose, Rabbi Chelsea Feuchs, and JFS Congregational Social Worker Rebecca Nieubuurt. These three leaders enjoy working together regularly to help meet the needs of seniors, their loved ones, and others in our community over the years. They partnered in the fall when Rabbi Richard Address came to speak about a celebratory approach to aging as part of TBE's Sacred Aging Institute (SAI), a relatively new initiative to address the spiritual and educational needs of seniors.

Anyone and everyone in the Washtenaw Jewish community is warmly encouraged to register for and attend the Health and Wellness Fair on May 18. Please visit the TBE website templebethemeth.org to register for the fair. You can also see more about the important services Rebecca and the whole JFS team provide at jfsannarbor.org. If you have questions or need help with registration, or if you would like more information about SAI, please be in touch with Rabbi Chelsea at rabbifeuchs@templebethemeth.org ■

Mental Health Awareness Month: Prioritize your mental health

By Roya Rieden

As we observe Mental Health Awareness Month this May, we're given the opportunity to reflect on the importance of mental health, how it affects our overall well-being, and make it a priority. Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, and stress affect millions of individuals each year. Unfortunately, mental health challenges are often still met with stigma, preventing many from seeking the help they need. Untreated mental health can lead to more severe issues that may impact personal relationships, work performance, and overall quality of life.

Despite the benefits, many hesitate to seek therapy due to misconceptions or fear of discussing personal struggles. However, therapy goes beyond just talking; it helps individuals develop coping strategies, build self-awareness, and manage emotions more effectively, leading to positive mental and physical outcomes. Thrive Counseling at JFS provides a positive approach to mental, emotional and behavioral health and provided services to over 500 clients last year.

People attend therapy for a variety of reasons, whether because of a pattern of internal pain, daily life stressors, or difficulties within their relationships. This pain can involve feelings of anxiety, sadness or depression, loneliness, grief, frustration, anger, or even adjustment to life changes. Our team of therapists are skilled, compassionate, and dedicated to providing holistic, culturally sensitive care. Our clinic is a training site for master's level professional counseling and social work students, who work in close consultation with their fully licensed supervisors, to provide high quality counseling. We offer individual counseling for adults and school-aged youth (ages 5–17), as well as couples and family counseling. Counseling is offered via telehealth or in-person with some evening appointments available, depending on client preference and therapist availability. In addition to English, Thrive therapists also speak Spanish and Russian.

Over the last several years, Thrive has benefited from several fruitful training and funding opportunities to increase access and better service delivery for clients. Beginning in the fall of 2024, JFS was awarded multi-year grant funding through SAMHSA (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration) to be able to expand services for youth, focusing on the treatment of trauma and grief for underserved and marginalized populations. Thrive staff have completed training and offer group services at schools through the use of Trauma Systems Informed Therapy for Refugees (TST-R). TST-R is both a clinical model for the efficient and effective treatment of children impacted by trauma, and an organizational model to guide the successful integration of trauma-informed, culturally responsive care into organizations' existing system of care. We are excited to offer these inclusive and growing services at Thrive Counseling!

To access Thrive Counseling, you can request services online using the following link or call 734-436-4249 to complete a brief screening over the phone or go to https://www.jfsannarbor.org/request-an-appointment-thrive-counseling.html ■

May Calendar

Always check websites or call for updates before planning to attend anything listed here and for prayer services.

Thursday 1
Yom Ha'Atzmaut Israeli Block Party: Federation. At the JCC. 5 p.m.

Friday 2
Candle Lighting 8:18 p.m.
First Friday Shabbat: JCS. Dinner from a local restaurant follows a short observance that includes secular readings, songs, candle lighting, wine, and challah. Children are welcome. Dinner is free for JCS members. The cost of dinner for non-members is $10/person or $25/family. Registration required: ww.jewishculturalsociety.org 6:30 p.m.

Saturday 3
Havdallah 9:23 p.m. Tazria-Metzora
Shabbat Morning Services. Pardes Hannah. In-person and online. 10 a.m.

Sunday 4
Immigration Rights and Wrongs: BIC. Margo Schlanger and Brad Maze. 1 to 3 p.m.
Third Annual A2 Climate Teach-In: Turn Climate Distress into Climate Action: First UUA Building. 1:30 to 5:15 p.m.
Genesis 50th: Gemini at Genesis Family Concert: At Genesis/TBE. 4 p.m.

Monday 5
Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival IN PERSON event: "The Blonde Boy from Casbah" State Theatre. 2 p.m.

Tuesday 6
Ann Arbor Jewish Film Festival IN PERSON event: "Sabbath Queen" State Theatre. 7 p.m.

Wednesday 7
Zilka Joseph and Isaac Pickell: Jewish Poets of Color. AADL Downtown. 6:30 p.m.

Thursday 8

Friday 9
Candle Lighting 8:26 p.m.

Saturday 10 Acharei-Kedoshim
Havdallah 9:32 p.m.

Sunday 11

-**Monday 12**
ISRAEL360 Presents: Dr. Victor Lieberman - The Mideast Conflict: Where Has It Been and Where Is It Going?: BIC. 7:30 p.m.

Tuesday 13
Maimonides Society Event. How will DOGE and RFK, Jr. affect medical care panel. On Zoom.7:30 p.m.

Wednesday 14

-**Thursday 15**
Hebrew Day School of Ann Arbor 50th Anniversary Celebration: HDS. 6:30 p.m.

Friday 16 Lag-B'Omer
Candle Lighting 8:33 p.m.
Saturday 17 Emor
Havdallah 9:41 p.m.
Benji Lovitt presents Seriously Funny: How Israelis Laugh to Keep from Crying. Kol Ami, W Bloomfield. Tickets needed. 7 p.m.

Sunday 18
TBE: Community Health & Wellness Fair: TBE. 3 – 6 p.m.
Sparks of Community Lag b'Omer: Federation. 6 – 8:30 p.m.

Monday 19

Tuesday 20

Wednesday 21
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. About 45 minutes each of conversation and reading. Free and open to all those interested in Yiddish language, literature, and culture, no matter what level of proficiency. For more information, to get the link, and to make certain that we are meeting on a specific day, please email Elliot H. Gertel at egertel@umich.edu at least one day before scheduled meeting day every Wednesday (except major Jewish holidays). 2:30 p.m.

-**Thursday 22**

Friday 23
Candle Lighting 8:40 p.m.

Saturday 24 Behar- Bechukotai
Havdallah 9:49 p.m.

Sunday 25

Monday 26 Yom Yerushalayim

Tuesday 27
Piano Concert Talk: The Best of Jewish Music and Composers. AADL Downtown. 6:30 p.m.

Wednesday 28 Rosh Hodesh Sivan
Yidish tish: (Virtual) (Yiddish Conversation & Reading Group): Zoom. 2:30 p.m.
Obscure Yiddish Folk Songs, Both Humorous and Heartbreaking — with Mikhl Yashinsky. AADL Downtown. 6:30 p.m.
Federation Annual Meeting: 7 p.m.

Thursday 29

Friday 30
Candle Lighting 8:46 p.m.

Saturday 31 Bamidbar
Havdallah 9:56 p.m.

Phone numbers, websites, and addresses of organizations frequently listed in the calendar:

Ann Arbor Orthodox Minyan (AAOM): 1429 Hill Street, 248-408-3269, annarborminyan.org

Ann Arbor Reconstructionist Congregation (AARC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-445-1910, aarecon.org

Beth Israel Congregation (BIC): 2000 Washtenaw Ave, 734-665-9897, bethisrael-aa.org

Chabad House: 715 Hill Street, 734-995-3276, jewmich.com

Eastern Michigan University Center for Jewish Studies (EMU): www.emich.edu/jewish-studies/

Frankel Center: 202 S. Thayer St., lsa.umich.edu/judaic/

Jewish Community Center (JCC): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 745-971-0990, jccannarbor.org

Jewish Cultural Society (JCS): 2935 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-975-9872, jewishculturalsociety.org

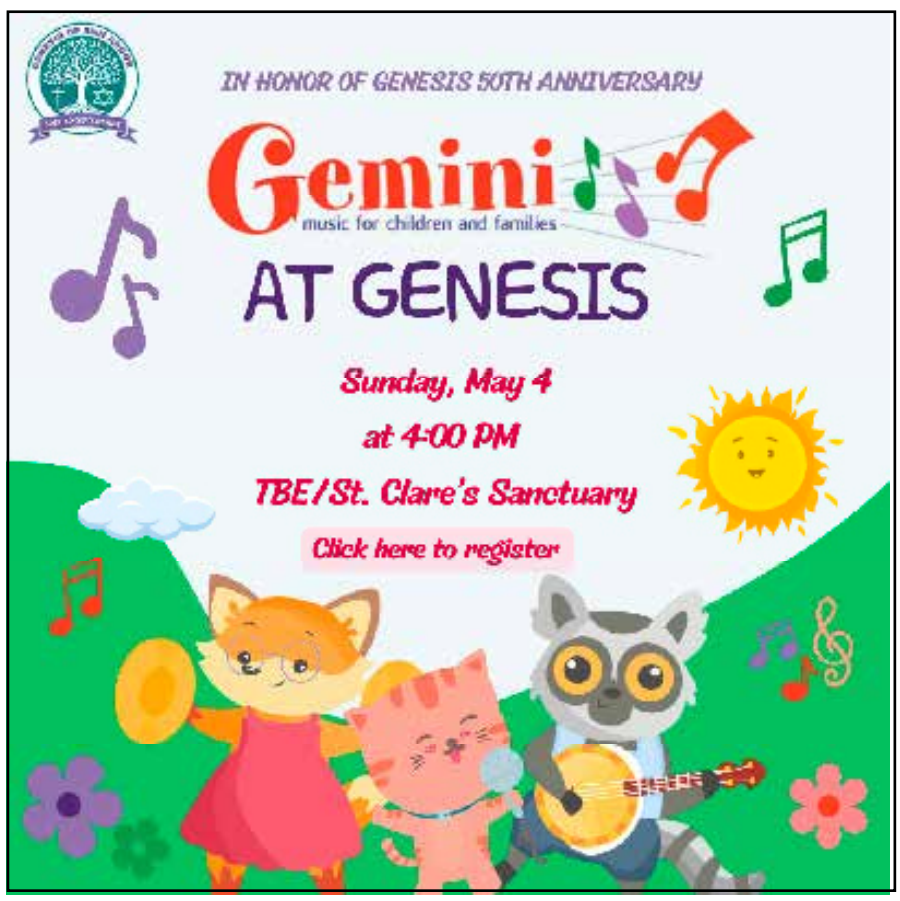
Jewish Family Services (JFS): 2245 South State Street, 734-769-0209, jfsannarbor.org

Jewish Federation: 2939 Birch Hollow Drive, 734-677-0100, jewishannarbor.org

Pardes Hannah: 2010 Washtenaw Ave, 734-761-5324, pardeshannah.org

Temple Beth Emeth (TBE): 2309 Packard Road, 734-665-4744, templebethemeth.org

UM Hillel: 1429 Hill Street 734-769-0500, michiganhillel.org



Feature

Washtenaw women who farm

By Sarah Rigg

More women are getting into farming all over the United States, including Washtenaw County, which saw more than a 44% increase in women farmers over a 10-year period. That's one statistic that came out of a recent study by Trace One, an organization specializing in regulatory compliance in the food and beverage industry.

Data used in the study was sourced from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) 2022 edition of the Census of Agriculture. The study's author, Federico Fontanella, says that, as an employee of Trace One, he keeps tabs on agricultural trends that influence the supply chain.

"We saw an opportunity to examine how the role of women in agriculture has changed over time, both to highlight their growing contributions and to better understand where women are playing leadership roles in food production," Fontanella says.

The study author noted that while Washtenaw County isn't among the top counties nationwide, it has a high share of female producers for a Midwestern county. That's especially true considering that Michigan overall is just below the national average, with women making up 35% of producers statewide, representing a total of 934 female farm owners, while the share nationally is 40.6%.

The data shows that these percentages vary by region and specialty. The northeast states and southwest states have particularly high percentages of female farmers, and women farmers are more heavily concentrated in livestock and food animal farming than in other areas, for instance.

None of those statistics are surprising to Kim Bayer, owner of Slow Farm, a 187-acre certified organic U-pick farm just north of Ann Arbor. She says that, other than inheriting a family farm, one of the most popular routes into farming is apprenticing on a farm. And she is seeing lots of women apply for farmhand roles.

Bayer says women farmers in Washtenaw County are often succeeding by finding the right niche, like Whitney Farmstead's emphasis on pasture-fed food animals or Kristen Muehlhauser's offering of organic flowers through her Whitmore Lake-based Raindance Organic Farm.

Bayer also says she thinks that women get into farming for reasons that match their values, like emphasizing organic and sustainable practices.

"Farming at a scale where you're growing food for people, is something that matches the values of a lot of women who care about the health and future of the planet and of our children and of our communities," she says.

Fontanella confirms that the study found that there is a correlation between organic farming and women farmers.

"Counties with more small-to-midsize farms, a focus on direct-to-consumer markets, or participation in organic and specialty crop production tend to have higher female representation," he says.

Bayer says she feels that women farmers feel especially isolated, and she recently tried to remedy that. Washtenaw County residents started the tradition of a "farmer beer night" a few years ago, where local farmers put out a call on an email list to meet up at a local brewery once a month or so. Those are important networking opportunities, Bayer says, but they tend to be male-dominated, so, last year, she started an informal networking group with other women farmers.

"I felt women farmers in particular want to talk to each other and share challenges and problem solving with each other," she says. One of those challenges is that, despite the growing number of women in farming, the stereotypes of a farmer being an older white man persists. Bayer says even at places like the Farm Services Agency, the FSA employees are sometimes surprised she is the farm owner and not her male partner.

"Or people will come out to the farm and assume one of the men on the farm knows everything about the farm and is the owner," she says. "It's a very common occurrence."

Bayer says the sign-up list for the women farmers group contained more than 30 names, and about 15 or 20 came regularly to the monthly meetings that rotated among members' farms. The group is on hiatus now but will likely start up again later this month or in early May, Bayer says.

"It's really powerful when people in a system can form a network, get to know and help each other, share researches, and even sometimes share their staff," Bayer says. "Sometimes farming can feel very isolating. It requires a lot of focus, and a lot of farmers don't get out a lot. So, you want to make it count when you do, and have the support of other people who know what you're going through."

Fontanella says that counties and municipalities can take steps to support women in farming. That could include investing in local food infrastructure including farmers markets, mentorship programs, or targeted outreach efforts to underrepresented food producers.

"The data suggests that women are especially active in smaller-scale, diversified, and specialty agriculture, including sectors like greenhouse production, vegetable farming, and livestock operations involving smaller animals," Fontanella says. "Programs that support access to land, capital, and training for these types of enterprises may be particularly effective in encouraging more women to enter or expand their roles in agriculture. Supporting community-based agriculture and reducing barriers to entry, especially around land access and financing, can make a meaningful difference."

Sarah Rigg is a freelance writer and editor in Ypsilanti Township and the project manager of *On the Ground Ypsilanti.* You may reach her at sarahrigg1@gmail.com.■

JCLP and communal art

By Julia Diskin

My cohort in the University of Michigan's Jewish Communal Leadership Program (JCLP) in the School of Social Work (SSW) began on August 28, 2023. The two-year certificate program within the SSW immersed us in questions of Jewish community and identity. Our cohort was small, only three of us, but we were driven by a common goal: to be a force of positive change in the world around us. As curious, hopeful and eager students, we embarked on our journey to become social workers. Perhaps we entered with our hopes too high, and perhaps we were somewhat naive, because just 41 days later, October 7 shook the Jewish community to its very core. We had to redefine what community meant to us.

When we began JCLP, we had big plans: to integrate our Jewishness with our social work, collaborate with other student groups, discuss challenges facing our community, and meet with Jewish professionals from various fields to expand our network and knowledge. In the blink of an eye, the world we knew and the kinship we felt within the SSW community as a whole painfully morphed into a new and brutal reality. We lost the capacity to engage with the broader community as that community seemed to fracture before our very eyes. Throughout the rest of that first year, we engaged with communal leaders seeking to support us, and we became devoted to supporting each other.

While it felt necessary to retreat inward last year, we yearned to branch out and resume the work outside our bubble. That is why this year we dedicated so much of our time to repairing, reviving, and reconnecting with the broader community. At the same time, we knew that our own Jewish community was still in need of tender love and care.

Each year, second-year JCLP students are tasked with putting together an event known as the Communal Conversation. In fact, the first Communal Conversation occurred exactly 13 years prior to ours! While these events often attempt to engage the broader community in issues of Jewish concern, this year we wanted to do something for our Jewish communities in Ann Arbor and at the University. We aimed to highlight themes of Jewish joy, connection, transformation, and resilience. Despite the seemingly impossible moments of the past 17

months, we wanted to create something beautiful. We decided upon a community mural, a work of art full of light, pride, and hopefulness.

Our Communal Conversation was a community endeavor. We partnered with Michigan Hillel and the Jewish Community Center of Greater Ann Arbor and drew upon financial support from the Frankel Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Michigan and the Zelma Weisfeld Fund of the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. With all this and the vision, expertise, and presence of world-renowned visual artist Hillel Smith, we were able to bring our dream to life.

As we gathered at Hillel on Sunday, March 23, each participant was given a canvas to paint on. The prompts for creativity that we shared with the group included "A World You Dream Of," "Imagine a peaceful world: what does that look like?", "Create a drawing that depicts the future you hope for in the world," "What does the world look like, and how have things improved?", and "Your Inner Landscape: Draw what your mind or heart feels like today or to express the feelings you have had since October 7. It can be abstract, surreal, or symbolic of your state of being." We welcomed students, community members, and a good number of children to the Hillel dining room for this activity. Once everyone had finished their paintings, we combined the individual canvases into a community mural. The final result was breathtaking. It was exhilarating to witness the strength, purity, and heartfelt contributions from our Jewish community. This event felt like a full circle moment, a way to capture both the hardship and resilience we hold as individuals and as a collective, and our ever-enduring sense of hope for a better future. ■

Obituaries

The WJN prints obituaries, memories, and eulogies free of charge for family members of Washtenaw Jewish community members as a service to the community and to honor the lives of those who have passed away. When local congregations send condolence notices to the WJN, the editor searches for obituaries online. Also, community members are invited to send obituaries to the editor.

Cyril Moscow died at the age of 91 on April 8, 2025. Born to Jewish immigrants from present-day Ukraine in the Dexter neighborhood of Detroit in 1933, Cyril went on to become a lawyer of great distinction and the central pillar of a large family, known for his towering intellect, sharp wit, and devotion to his loved ones.

As a child, Cyril weathered the Great Depression with his family in a home shared with cousins, worked his first job as a drug store soda jerk, and spent time playing poker with friends and following the Detroit Tigers. He commuted from home to Wayne State University, where he studied history, before going on to graduate from the University of Michigan Law School. He met Rona (née Weingarten) at a party, where he noticed her standing by the refrigerator, and they wed in 1957. Cyril and Rona raised their three children in Detroit and later outside the city in Birmingham. When the kids were older, Cyril supported Rona as she went back to work as an adult education specialist and shared household duties.

Cyril began his legal career in 1957 as a trial attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Division. After three years, he moved on to private practice, where he spent 65 years as a highly respected corporate lawyer at Honigman in Detroit, advising clients in corporate matters and security transactions. He also taught as an adjunct professor of law at the University of Michigan Law School for 43 years. Cyril was frequently listed in Michigan Super Lawyers and The Best Lawyers in America and was elected to the Michigan Lawyers Weekly Hall of Fame in 2023. Cyril co-authored Michigan Corporation Law and Practice, a comprehensive research tool on state corporate law, and continued to update it throughout his career. He was devoted to and energized by his work, so much so that he could not bring himself to retire, and he continued to spend time in the office until just days before his death.

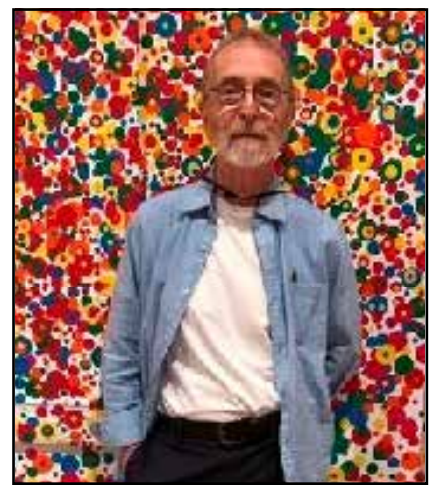
Cyril was an avid traveler who loved exploring nature and city life around the world, from China to Mexico, often accompanied by Rona until her death in 2001, his children and grandchildren, or his partner Randie. While he was especially stunned by the landscape of New Zealand, he liked to joke that no place he visited was as beautiful as the shores of Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore in northern Michigan, where he spent time every summer and many winters beginning in 1970. He loved to take long walks along the lakeshore and in the dunes, play with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren in the sand, and take them on hikes where they could pick out their own "walking sticks." To his grandchildren's delight, he often announced that he was heading down to the beach by saying he had to "check that the lake was still there."

Cyril took great joy in literature and the arts. He loved to attend the symphony, ballet, and opera, and to spend hours observing great works in art museums around the world. He read classic fiction and nonfiction, delighting in the works of Marcel Proust, Henry James, and Samuel Johnson, and often incorporating quotes or pieces of wisdom into everyday conversations. For all his interest in high culture, Cyril also loved a good laugh from watching The Marx Brothers or listening to "I'm My Own Grandpa," and believed deeply in the art of creating a good pantry meal from a can of tuna or a boxed Trader Joe's soup. Above all, Cyril cherished the moments when he could have all of his grandchildren together in one place, and roll call them "Number one? (Here!) Number two? (Here)" all the way until eight.

Cyril greatly valued preserving the Jewish community of his upbringing and Yiddish language of his parents. He was a regular attendee of Adat Shalom in Farmington Hills and Beth Israel in Ann Arbor and a patron of the Yiddish Book Center, where he funded summer scholarships for students. He took a great interest in supporting arts and social justice causes in the Detroit area, and was a founding board member of the Levin Center for oversight and democracy.

Cyril will be greatly missed by his children, Dan (Sharon Strauss) Moscow, Ruth Moscow-Cohen (Robert Cohen), and Karen (Andrew) Auerbach; his grandchildren, Anna Cohen (Michael Keefer), Mari Cohen, Lena Auerbach, Sarah Cohen, Rachel Auerbach, Juniper Moscow, Oliver Moscow, and Joseph Auerbach; his great-grandchildren, Esme and Adam Keefer; his sister, Sandra (the late Alan) Eidelman; sister-in-law Shirley Moscow; and his partner of 22 years, Randie Levin. He is preceded in death by parents Rose and Sam Moscow, wife Rona Moscow, and older brother David (Shirley) Moscow.

Funeral recording available on the Ira Kaufman website.



Robert "Bob" Sims died on January 27. Bob was born in Detroit, Michigan, to Arthur Sims and Faye Simon Sims. Bob loved magic tricks as a boy and played several instruments — flute, piccolo, piano, recorder, and tenor and alto saxophone. He graduated from the University of Michigan in the early days of computers, becoming a pioneer in systems design and ultimately running a successful specialized computer personnel and projects company, Software Services. Bob loved puns and being playful. He loved movement — flying airplanes, riding motorcycles, and driving cars. He also loved dancing, roller skating, ice skating, tap dancing, ushering, being active, and attending concerts, plays, and movies.

He was active in the Ann Arbor Jewish community through his involvement with the Federation and the Jewish Cultural Society. He treasured his small family: wife Elaine, daughter Megan, and grandson, Mario. After retirement he devoted energies to choreographing the flying of radio control helicopters to music, becoming recognized internationally. He also took up snowboarding in his senior years, traveling with groups such as the Ski Geezers and Grays on Trays. Through his many years with dementia, he never lost his playfulness, punning, or appreciation for life, sunrises and sunsets, and loved ones and friends.

Rene Lichtman passed away at 87 years old on January 28 in the Detroit area, which he called home for over 50 years. Rene was born in 1937 in Paris, France to parents Helen and Jacob Zajdman. He immigrated to the U.S. with his mother in 1950 when he was 12 years old. Surviving family members include his wife of 54 years Cathy, and his children Joshua (Davida Finger), David (Julie Conklin), Risa Lichtman (Jamie Thrower), and Maceo Bishop, as well as grandchildren Emzi, Laizer, Benjamin, and Lou, and other loving family and friends.

Rene was a Holocaust survivor, artist, and activist, and was passionate about his work in all of those fields. As one of the founders and leaders of the World Federation of Jewish Child Survivors of the Holocaust, Rene dedicated his life to Holocaust education and sharing his story. He traveled many times to France and Poland focusing on this work, bringing together child survivors and their descendants from around the world. As an artist, he spent his life creating in different mediums. He was a painter, filmmaker, and photographer, and was actively painting right up until the end of his life. His time as a young artist living in New York City and traveling throughout Europe was fundamental in shaping his identity as an artist. Just as important to him was an unwavering commitment to activism. Rene was deeply political and was steadfast in fighting for those who did not have a voice. He was actively protesting and organizing for social justice right up until his passing.

From the *Detroit Free Press:* "A few months after Donald Trump became president for the first time, Rene Lichtman marched down Woodward Avenue in Pontiac along with other protesters holding up a sign that read 'No Human Being is Illegal.'

"'You have to resist,' he told the *Free Press* on the first day of May in 2017 at a rally in support of immigrants opposing raids by federal immigration agents.

"As a Holocaust survivor aided by a Catholic family in France who took him in, Lichtman drew upon his life experiences as a Jewish child during World War II to guide his views, becoming a noted activist in Michigan. He often demonstrated in support of immigrants and Palestinians, speaking to students and others about the Holocaust.

"At his funeral and in online tributes over the past week, the Jewish activist was remembered as an outspoken man whose views and ideas are once again relevant today amid concern over Gaza and immigration enforcement as Trump starts a second term. He was a controversial figure, drawing criticism at times from others in the Jewish community who objected to his frequent criticisms of Israel that invoked the Holocaust. In December 2023, he laid down in the street, with police around him, in front of the Zekelman Holocaust Center in Farmington Hills, to bring attention to Israel's attacks in Gaza, holding a sign that read: 'Jews and Allies say: Never Again for Anyone.'"

Rene worked for nearly two decades at Beaumont Hospital in the field of instructional technology, and received his PhD in that field at 63 years old. He will be remembered for his strong commitment to social justice and activism, and the way he worked to inspire change around him. His absence will be felt far and wide by his family and many loved ones.

Dr. Marilyn Heins, pediatrician, parenting educator, and author, died on March 10, 2025. Born in Boston in 1930 to Esther Heins, a botanical artist, and Harold Heins, an electrical engineer, she graduated from Radcliffe College and received her MD from the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University. She interned in pediatrics at The New York Hospital, completed a

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Obituaries

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residency in pediatrics at Babies Hospital in New York, and was a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics. Dr. Heins served as Director of Pediatrics at Detroit Receiving Hospital and Director of Project PRESCAD, a federally funded program to provide comprehensive health services for medically indigent children. She was the first woman to serve as Associate, then Vice Dean, at the University of Arizona College of Medicine, where she was also a Professor of Pediatrics. She was also the first woman to serve as a department head at Detroit Receiving Hospital and the first woman Associate Dean at Wayne State University School of Medicine. Dr. Heins served as a member of the Editorial Board of the Journal of the American Medical Association, as the first woman Chair of the Group on Student Affairs of the Association of American Medical Colleges, and on the National Board of Medical Examiners.

Dr. Heins served on many university and community boards, belonged to many professional organizations, and was active in community organizations focusing on childrens' health, education, parenting, and women's issues. She was a member of the Veteran Feminists of America and a recipient of the YMCA of Tucson Women on the Move Award, the Radcliffe College Alumnae Recognition Award, and the Arizona Medical Association President's Award, among others.

Her special interests in pediatrics included helping parents to parent and teaching health professionals how to help parents parent. She published many papers as well as two parenting books, and her website, ParentKidsright.com, was a popular resource for busy parents. She started to write a weekly parenting column for the Arizona Daily Star in 1989 and personally answered countless parenting questions for column and website readers. In her 80s she began to shift the focus of these columns to ageing, stressing that we must learn to parent ourselves in this stage of life. She was also a popular lecturer who spoke to many groups of parents, grandparents, teachers, and others who worked with children.

Dr. Heins was an avid supporter of the arts, especially opera and chamber music, and a voracious reader who once belonged to three book groups simultaneously. She traveled widely to more than 100 countries and visited all 50 states. She was married to Milton Lipson, a veterinarian, for 47 years until his death in 2007. She is survived by her companion of 12 years, Milton Francis, and her children, Dr. Rachel Glick (Gary) of Ann Arbor, Michigan, and Jonathan Lipson (Veronica) of Los Angeles, California, and two stepchildren, Ashley Lipson (Anna) of Los Angeles, California, and Robert Lipson (Shirley) of Shreveport, Louisiana, as well as six grandchildren and three step great-grandchildren.

Ezekiel "Zeke" Mauricio Koster passed away surrounded by family on April 14, 2025 in Livonia, Michigan.

Zeke was born on January 21, 1975 in Bogotá, Colombia and was adopted at a very young age. A world traveler and road trip enthusiast, he made many trips across the country by car, always drawn to new sights. On many of his trips, Zeke was always eager to set up camp and enjoy a campfire.

From his earliest days as a Boy Scout, Zeke embodied the Scout spirit. He rose to the rank of Eagle Scout and later became a dedicated pack leader, guiding others with the same integrity, patience, and heart. Zeke was also a beloved coach and team manager for countless young athletes at Rudolf Steiner School, Pioneer High School, Lincoln High School, and Eastern Michigan University.

Zeke's connection to the Rudolf Steiner School ran deep. He gave his time generously, volunteering at many events and becoming a cherished presence in the community. His Jewish faith was also an anchor in his life, and he was a proud and active member of Temple Beth Emeth in Ann Arbor.

Zeke found fulfillment at Bitty & Beau's Café, where he took pride in his work and built meaningful connections with everyone he encountered. He had a remarkable gift for making friends and keeping them. His lifelong bond with his best friend Knut, which began in the third grade, stands as a testament to his loyalty.

Zeke also had a soft spot for animals and looked after many stray cats in his neighborhood. He was a true history buff, often stopping at battlegrounds and historical sites, eager to learn and reflect. A fan of card games and thoughtful conversation, Zeke had a knack for making any moment meaningful and fun. Zeke dearly loved his wife, Kristin, and they would have celebrated 19 years of marriage in May.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Donald Edgar Koster and Marilyn Hope (Axelrod) Koster; and brother in law, Charlie Jordan.

Zeke is survived by his wife, Kristin Jordan-Koster; brother, Seth (Anne) Koster; sister, Sarai Koster-Stetson, her children, nieces, Zoe (Tyler Tovatt) and Isabella Koster-Mockeridge; nephew, Jack Stetson; in laws, Kathy Jordan-Sedgeman and Mark Sedgeman; sister in law, Maggie (Rick Green) Glass, nephews, Dennis Glass and Jordan Hamilton, niece, Sabrina Green; best friend, Knut (Meredith) Rosenkrands Hill and their children, Bekan Hill and Rowan Hill; and multiple aunts, uncles, and cousins. ■

Simchas and Sorrows

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends condolences to the families of:

Marilyn Heins Lipson, mother of Rachel (Gary) Glick, grandmother to Jeremy and Hannah. Monday, March 10, 2025.

Ellen Bosco, sister of Miriam Shaw, aunt of Debby and Dan Shaw, and great aunt to Koa. Monday, March 10, 2025.

Max Abramzon, father of Anya Abramzon (Alex Levitsky), and grandfather of Jacob, Gulia, and Eli. Friday, April 4, 2025.

Lillian Blair, mother of Sara Blair, March 30.

The Washtenaw Jewish community sends mazel tovs to:

Mazel tov to Beth Dwoskin and Bob Blumenthal on the birth of their granddaughter Avi Leora on March 2 to parents Judy Blumenthal and Elliot Shriner-Cahn and big sister Hila Shriner-Cahn.

Lily Sukenic on her Sunday bat mitzvah, May 18.

Charlotte Arnkoff on her afternoon bat mitzvah on May 31.

Mark Daskin and David Markovitz on their election to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 2024.

Counting to Shavuot

Trisha Arlin

Blessed Mystery,

In it for the long haul,
We begin the count.

We count centuries from Joseph to Moses,
Count years from the burning bush to the Song of the Sea.

Count weeks from manna to Sinai ,
Count days from the blare of the horn to the Golden calf.

Count the five books of Moses,
Count the 24 books of the Tanakh.

Count the 49 days of the Omer
Count the seven sefirot,

Count and take us to Shavuot and
Count the cheese blintzes.

Maybe it's a myth,
Maybe it's current events.

But Torah is only the beginning,
We're in it for the long haul.

And everyone has a Sea of Reeds to cross,
Everyone has a story.

Blessed Holy Wholeness,
Everyone counts.

Amen

Reprinted from Ritualwell.org

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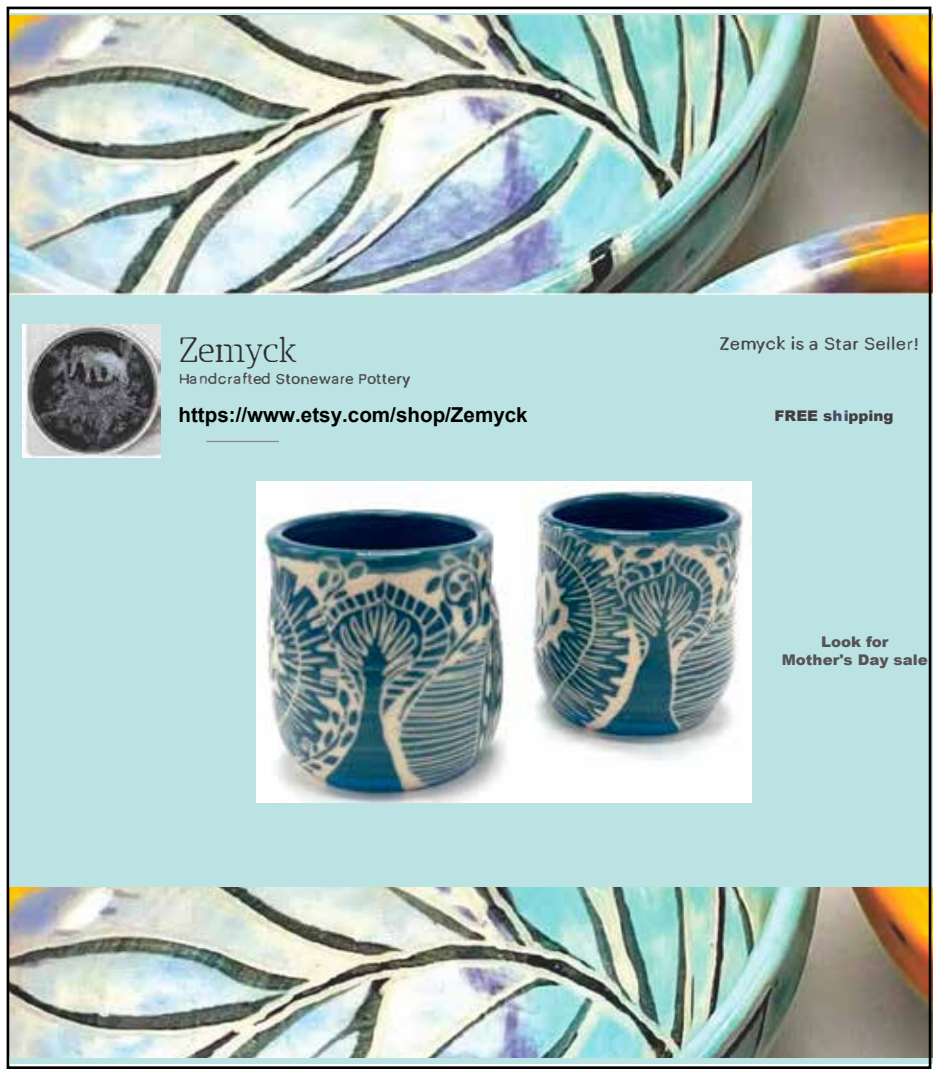

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11AM–4PM

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EXHIBITORS

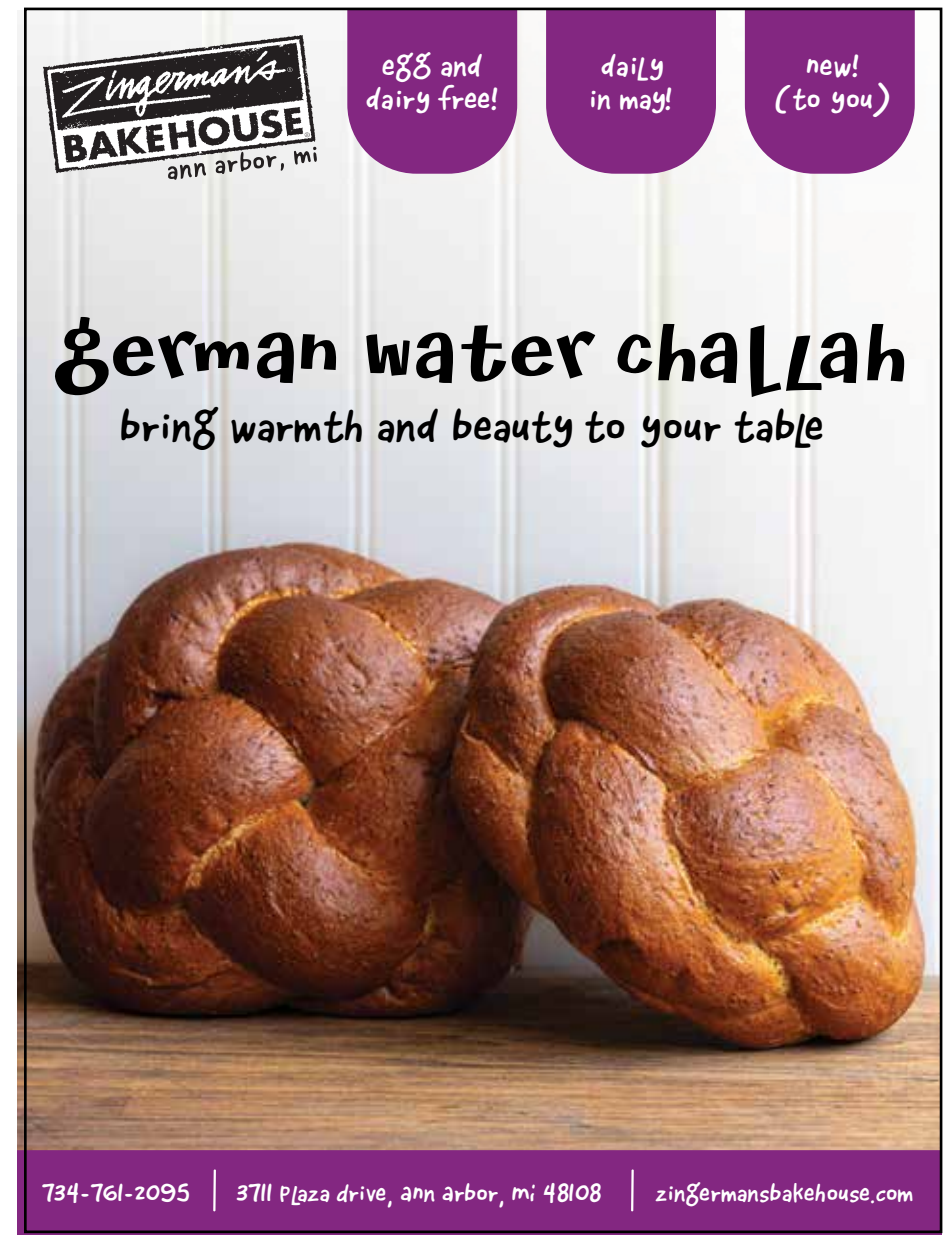
PRODUCT DEMONSTRATIONS

FREE ADMISSION

HUMAN GUIDES

bsbp Bureau of Services for Blind Persons

AADL.ORG/VISIONS



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